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EMPEROR'S  
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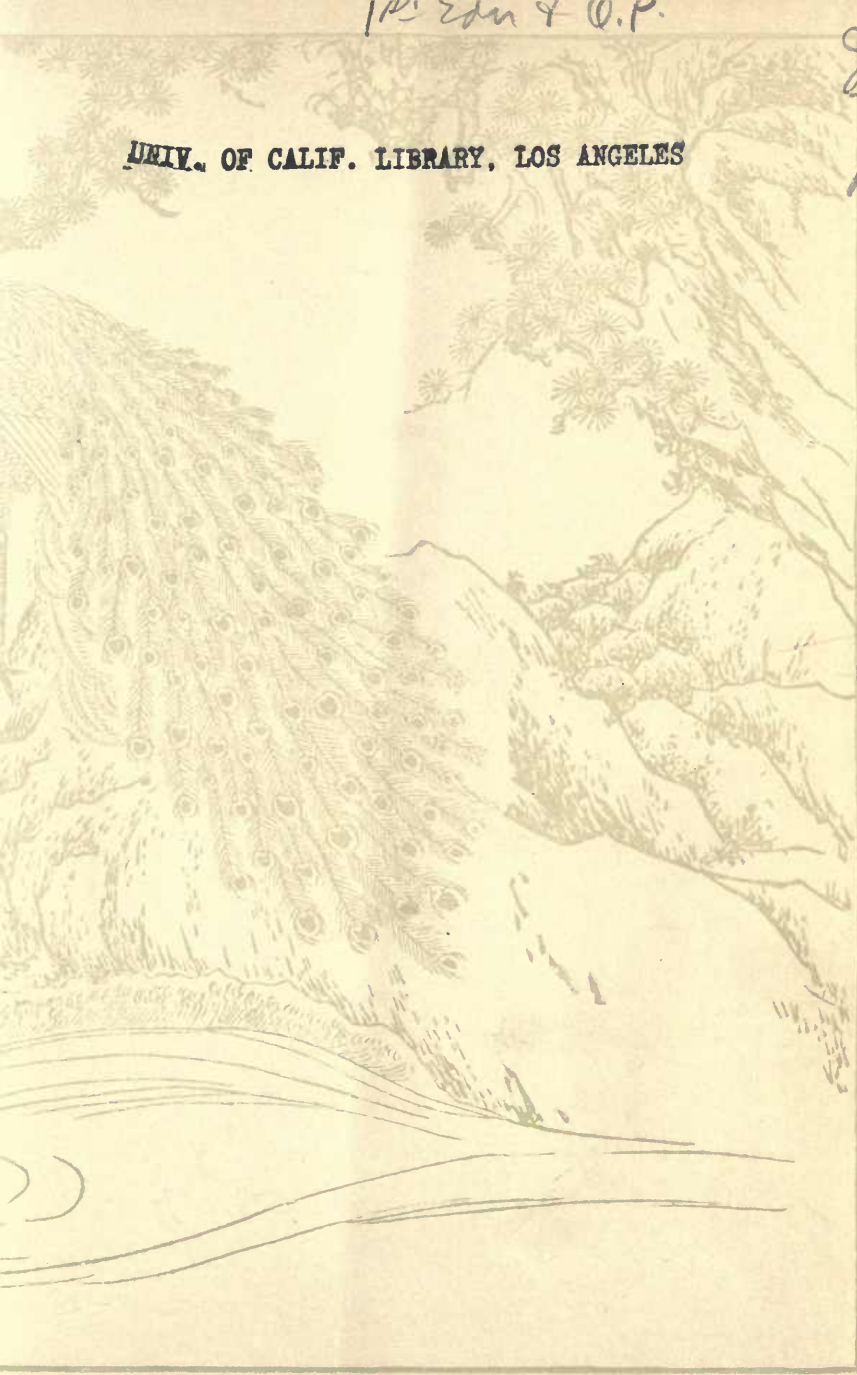
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*At the Emperor's Wish*



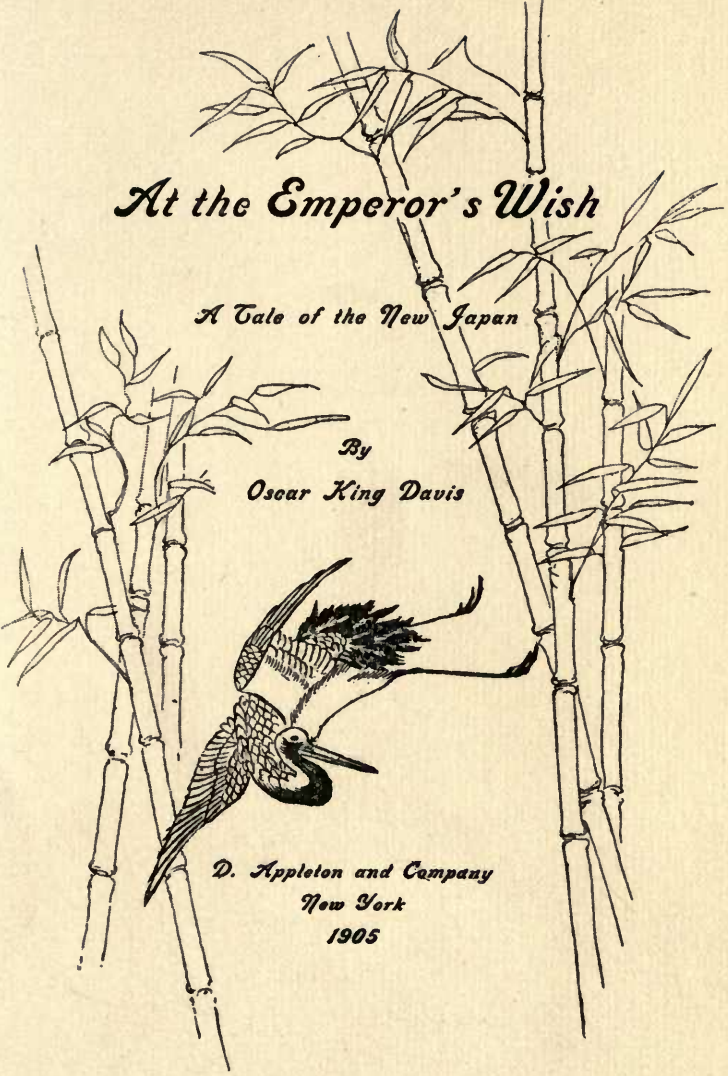








She was wonderfully beautiful.



# *At the Emperor's Wish*

*A Tale of the New Japan*

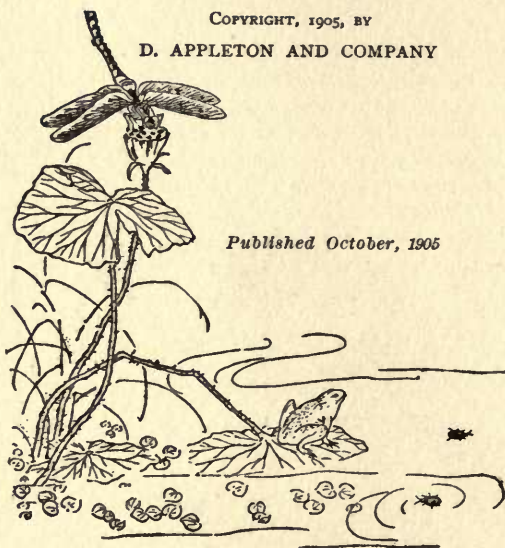
By  
*Oscar King Davis*



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*1905*

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TO  
THE REAL SOICHIS

*Who, by tens and hundreds of thousands, from all the  
corners of Dai Nippon, great and small, shizoku  
and heimin, with a simplicity, a courage and a  
faith that may well stand as models for all  
the world, and a passion of loyalty pass-  
ing occidental understanding, await  
only the occasion to demon-  
strate their glad, unselfish  
readiness to meet the  
Emperor's Wish*

O. K. D.





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## *At the Emperor's Wish*



### I

**F**AR out toward the end of Lower Timber Street, where incurious visitors to the city seldom stray, stands the house of Kudo Jukichi.

It is called Lower Timber Street, the Upper end being down in the city where once the stout castle of the Lord of the Clan was the center of all the life of the place. But the name is falsely descriptive, for it leads straight up to the beautiful hills, and ends abruptly in a sheer climb to the top of the

pine-clad cone where nestles a famous old Shinto shrine. The narrow path that winds up the steep hillside has been beaten smooth by thousands of pious feet. Below, curving down in gentle slopes, the verdure-covered hills ring in the town, and beyond the billowing roofs of blue-gray thatch and tile stretches the shining, island-dotted sea, warm and soft in the enormous blaze of summer.

To the casual observer there is nothing about the house of Kudo Jukichi to indicate the quality of those who dwell within. A dilapidated fence of split bamboos, that once was tall and fine, partly conceals the weather-beaten little structure and partly reveals it, with the tantalizing indistinctness of a veil over a beautiful face. If a curious stranger should stop and peer through the lattice-like breaks in the fence he would gaze upon wood-work grown soft and gray with age and the flagellation of rains. Even the tiles of the roof, laid with a care cognizant of earthquake and bitter storm, seem to have lost patience and outgrown their pride, and now to await only the semblance of opportunity to loose their hold and slide down. The shrubs along the narrow path that leads from the gate are



all unkempt and ragged, and the lone plum-tree that stands like the ghost of a garden sentinel in the corner of the tiny yard, touched by the general air of decay, struggles fitfully in the raw, cloudy days of spring to send forth here and there a spiritless blossom. One must be to the manner born, or carefully instructed, to detect, from the many signs of ruin all about, the single indication of the state of the householder. Such an one, perhaps, searching closely under the warped roof of the gateway, might find and read the cedar ticket which proclaims, according to law, to any who trouble to stop and read, that in this house of little ease lives Kudo Jukichi, a Gentleman of the Empire.

Kudo Jukichi, Gentleman! In the first year of Meiji, when he fought for the restoration of the young Emperor to the power that rightfully belonged to the Throne, he wore the two swords of a Samurai. But that was long ago. Kudo-san is an old man now, and thick gray hair covers the head where once rose the shining black topknot of a warrior. He sits on the soft mats of his little room with a book, or his pipe, and often falls to dreaming of the years of his youth, of the

stirring events that threw down the old established order and brought the Emperor again to his own. And if sometimes there comes to him a twinge of sentimental regret for the lost ways of life of the old régime, it is but natural. It has not been easy for Kudo-san to accept many of the changes that came with the new Western thought. His was not the cast of mind that accommodates itself readily to novel sensations and experiences. Only his passionate loyalty and devotion to the Emperor enabled him to smother the feeling of opposition within him, a feeling purely personal and selfish, in his Japanese conception, and therefore not entitled to much consideration. Loyalty with him was something more than a mere sense of duty. It was instinctive, from the heart, the very essence of his nature, and because of it he bore without complaint the heavy blows the new order dealt him.

The abolition of feudalism left him helpless, a dependant with none on whom to depend. But the reorganization of the army, and the promotion of the outcast Etas to citizenship and the proud opportunity of military service dazed him. The distinctive privilege of Samuraihood, the right to bear

arms, was destroyed, and after that nothing worse could befall. The capitalization of his hereditary income followed as a matter of course, and he accepted with uncomprehending bewilderment the bonds given him by the government he was no longer to serve. The fabric of his life was crumbling and he was powerless to stay its ruin. With hands clasped before him and head reverently bowed he stood in front of his little shrine and solemnly communed with the shades of the Kudos gone before. It was a new situation, and doubtful if they could understand. But one thing he knew, and in gentle voice, with unshaken faith, he announced it.

"It is the Emperor's wish!"

Fate dealt neither vigorously nor kindly with Kudo. It let him drift. While his bonds ran their income was sufficient for all his needs, but when the time of their redemption came he looked in dismay at the heap of money they brought him. Nothing in all his experience told him what to do with it. Skillfully invested, it would have furnished ample return, but investment was a science utterly beneath the contempt of a Samurai. It was the business of merchants and traders,

the men who devoted their lives to the despicable profession of gaining money. He took his fortune home, from the bank where it had been paid to him, wrapped up in a blue cotton bundle-kerchief, and gave it to his wife with the unconcern of complete scorn. He knew that that bundle alone stood between him and necessity, but he did not care. He lived contentedly on his little capital, nor ever let an anxious thought cross his mind because of its constant decrease.







## II

**S**CARCE two hundred yards distant from the house of Kudo Jukichi, around the corner in Azalea Street, there is a most striking evidence of the change the new Western life has brought to the Island Empire. The little shingle at the gate duly sets forth that Mr. Kutami Chobei, a Commoner, occupies that comfortable dwelling, but all the city knows it as the home of Chobei, the Eta. Prosperity radiates from the substantial house and wide grounds with their pleasant garden, and all the place is enfolded in its ample mantle. What cares the Commoner Kutami that his humble station is placarded over his hospi-

table doorway? But a handbreadth back in the space of years even that poor title seemed a measure of hopeless distinction to him. In the yesterday when neighbor Kudo wore the haughty swords of a Samurai his weapon would have leaped from its scornful scabbard if Chobei the Eta had dared pollute his presence. It was a great advance to be one of the multitude in the oblivion of the Commoners instead of one of the marked few of the Etas, despised, outcast, living apart from all his fellows except the unfortunates of his class. It had been a bitter life for Chobei, for although his sheer force of will had made him Chief of his village, a man of distinction among his own, that very strength of character made only more keen and poignant the disgrace of his position. The wealth he had accumulated in his business of tanner had little pleasure to give him, and it was the business itself, inherited from his fathers, generation after generation, that made him an Eta. That great stroke of the Emperor's which had shaken off the shackles of his caste restored him to manhood, and he blessed the fate that had brought the Western ideas to Japan and had set noble and Samurai

and outcast all equal before the law, face to face together with the problems of individual responsibilities and rewards.

Money is not yet everything in Japan, however rapidly its power may be advancing. But it is something to the Commoner and it was little better than nothing to the Eta. Kutami was proud of himself, in an humble way; proud that he had something to do with when opportunity to do came to him. More than all he was proud of the new nation, and loyal to it with the last drop of his blood. He was no soldier, but he did his part when the forces of the Empire went over sea to meet the armies of the Chinese in Korea and Manchuria. The business of his outcast days had grown with great strides under the incentive of his new ambition, and from being merely a tanner and dealer in leather he had become as well a manufacturer of boots and shoes. Now it was that the money he had won furnished the means of making return to the nation, and thousands of soldiers marched and fought in the boots Kutami the Commoner gave to his country.

There was no thought in Kutami's heart of anything but loyalty and gratitude to his

Emperor in this, but there was a result he did not foresee. Kudo Jukichi had been shaken out of his retirement by the war. All the old fire was revived in him, and his heart was heavy because he was neither able to offer service himself nor was his son old enough to take a soldier's part. In spite of the fact that they had lived for years at so little distance from each other, for Kudo it was as if Kutami had never existed. For though he might admit that there was advantage to the nation in some of the great changes of his later years, Jukichi was still at heart the Samurai of the old régime, and to him Chobei was still an Eta. But the gift of the boots touched his heart.

"Some men are called Samurai in name, but are outcasts at heart," he thought. "That man was called outcast but has acted like a Samurai."

Straightway he put on his finest silk kimono and stalking out of his gate turned the corner into Azalea Street. There was a flutter of excitement in the house of the Commoner when it was known that Kudo Jukichi had come to call. This was an honor that had been beyond their dreams. For,



although there had never been a word between the two families, well the Commoners knew their gentle neighbors, and it was not without a secret sympathy that Chobei had noticed the evidence of hard and harder fortune which increasing days brought to the Samurai. The situation of the Kudos had become, indeed, very much straitened. Jukichi had contrived to sell a few of the treasures of art that had been for generations in the family. But his was no nature for bargaining, and kakemono and vases that were priceless to genuine collectors had gone for the song the first unscrupulous dealer had offered. Valiant soldier and skillful swordsman that he had been, the Samurai was inept in the rough-and-tumble scramble for existence, and Chobei gladly would have made his sympathy practical if he had but known how.

It was truly a wonderful event for the Commoner when Jukichi voluntarily came to visit him. O-Koyo, his wife, herself fluttered into the room where the distinguished guest was sitting on the soft, white mat, and brought him tea, that fine long leaf with the heavy flavor of the straw mats that had kept

it always from the sun, so delightful to the taste of the Japanese connoisseur. Though it was the house of a man possessed of much wealth, there was no display of riches, except in the exquisite fineness of the wood, the beautiful grain carefully brought out in the soft polish and matched with an evenness and skill that betokened unusual pains and thought. In the alcove of the room where Jukichi sat hung a single old kakemono of rare merit, and the signature that caught his eye told him at once of its great value. Beneath it stood a vase of the famous ware that had long distinguished the old artists of his clan, and in it a single spray of blossoms. It was in perfect taste, and the old Samurai, as he sat down, felt a little glow of satisfaction, as if he had come back at last to the realities of the days before the inrush of Western innovation had done so much to cheapen and make vulgar all that it touched of the island art.

The simple directness of his character had not been changed by his years of vicissitude. The formalities of greeting were hardly ended when Jukichi plunged into the matter that had brought about his visit.

"I have heard," he said, "that you have made a great gift to the army."

A deprecatory smile crossed the face of the Commoner and he bowed very low.

"Ah, it was nothing," he replied, politely belittling what he had done. "It was only a few boots for the soldiers, who are worthy of very much more than one so humble as I can do for them."

"Nevertheless it is a fine thing to do," declared Jukichi, and for an instant there flashed in his eyes something of the old fire. "It is a fine thing for one who is not a soldier to give so much to the army."

Again Kutami bowed very low, and softly protested the trifling character of his act.

"I have heard that it was an entire division that you supplied," continued Jukichi. "I congratulate you. It is a very fortunate thing to be able to do so much for the Emperor."

Lower than ever Kutami bowed and for some time his head remained bent forward. At length he raised it and looked the old Samurai in the face.

"It was nothing at all," he said in a low

voice, "nothing at all. And the Emperor has done everything for me."

He wondered what Jukichi would do or say to such direct reference to his former condition, but loyalty knew no finer quality in the heart of the Samurai than it found in the breast of the Commoner, and though he insulted his honored guest, or died for it on the instant, Kutami would not have withheld that acknowledgment to his Sovereign. And in making it he touched the deepest chord in the Samurai's nature.

"I cannot be a soldier myself," the Commoner went on, after a little, "and my son is not old enough to take my place. But the Empire has given me a great deal, and I am very glad that I can give a little something to the sons of others who offer their lives for it."

"I, too, cannot be a soldier now," said Jukichi slowly, after a pause, "although in other years it was my duty and my privilege. And I, too, have a son too young to be of service in this war. But he shall be a soldier some day, and, if Heaven please, an officer of the Emperor."

The ring of the old clan pride was in the

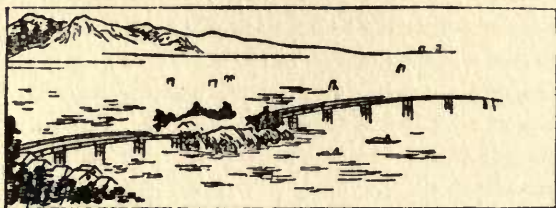


voice and the eyes flashed as if the father already saw the boy leading his men in the swinging charge.

"You are indeed fortunate," said Kutami gravely; "it is a great honor to have such a son, and it is but fitting that the son of such a father should become an officer." Again the deprecatory smile crossed his face as he continued: "But it is not for my son to think of so glorious a future. He shall do his duty when the time comes, and serve his country as best he can, but after that I am afraid we could not hope to attain such honor as it would be to have him continue in the army."

It was Jukichi's turn to bow and smile in deprecation. Then he rose to take his leave, and when Kutami had thanked him for the great honor he had conferred upon that poor house, he went away with a satisfaction in his heart he did not attempt to explain.





### III

**T**UKICHI'S son was a fine, sturdy lad who already in the public school was laying a solid foundation for the technical training which later was to fit him for an army career. He did not belie his inheritance. His military instinct manifested itself in the ease with which he excelled his mates in the martial exercises that formed part of his school duties. Often, too, it was revealed in his proud bearing toward his fellows. Ambition found large room in his small breast, and it was his determination to rival and even excel

the exploits and skill of that great ancestor, Kokan, whose name he bore. Jukichi had begun his instruction in swordsmanship early, and often the old Masamune blade, that had been the pride of the Kudos for generations, was brought out to take its part in the lessons. At fourteen Kokan was captain of a company of his schoolmates, and the stuff that was in him showed in his grief that his years unfitted him to bear a soldier's part in the war with China.

But the disappointment did not warp him. Rather it tended to confirm his ambition. And if he had needed a spur he would have found it in the boundless pride in him displayed by his sister, who was the playfellow of his home. O-Mitsu-san was four years his junior. As long as she could remember, from the days when she first toddled out into the yard on her small *getas*, and robed in the wonderful kimono, gay with bright butterflies, the days of her life had been devoted to adoration of her brother. To her he was everything that was fine and noble, and his imperious spirit received as its just due the deferential homage she paid to his years and his sex. She was little more than a baby, in

the Western conception, when O-Haru, the gentle mother, went away on the long journey to the Meido and left the house of Jukichi desolate, and it fell to her to take her mother's place in the management of the household and the anxious care of the slender, steadily diminishing means of support.

"Though the eagle be starving, yet will he not eat grain," say the Japanese, and Jukichi fulfilled the saying. No one saw better than he the inevitable end of the course he was pursuing. No one felt more than he the need of doing something to secure an income. Kokan would soon finish with the public schools, and before he would be sufficiently far advanced to enter one of the Local Military Preparatory Schools he must have some years of higher instruction, which no school in the city was fitted to give. The only means of possible relief that presented itself to Jukichi's prejudiced view was some sort of trade, a vile bargaining and selling for the sake of gaining the money which all his life he had despised. Moreover, he knew that he was unfitted by training as well as by nature for such work. The simple honesty of the old soldier, to whom death was a small



price to pay for honor, was no match for the unscrupulous cleverness of men whose native sharpness had been developed by years of practice in a profession from which nothing else was expected. And so Jukichi drifted on.

Between O-Haru and Jukichi there had existed a serene sweetness and depth of love such as seems impossible to the Western world, unused to the Japanese way, where marriages are so often matters of arrangement rather than sentiment. Perhaps it was the recollection of what she had been to him, and the profound sense of his loss, that kept Jukichi a widower. But the death of her mother brought some recompense to the little girl in the transfer to her of much of the calm and confident affection which had been O-Haru's happiness. More and more her father grew to depend on her in many matters in which he had followed the guidance of her mother, and there developed in her a judgment and self-reliance not often found in one of her years. While yet a child in age she was a woman in character. Not much of her time was spent in school, yet her instruction was not scanty for a Japanese girl. Most of it had been given by her father, whose

mode of life left him ample leisure for her lessons. She read well and she had the books of the *Bunko* that had been her mother's. Of this "Japanese Lady's Library" she was diligently studious, and already had attained familiarity with "Woman's Household Instruction," and the "Lesser Learning for Woman," and was intent upon the main part of the work, the profound "Greater Learning." Besides, she knew the "Hundred Poems," and often joined with her father and brother in an evening game of quotations. There was little interruption of the quiet current of the family life, and Jukichi loved to put aside pipe or book, when no visitor had come, and play thus with his children. But neither he nor Kokan ever gave a thought to the future of the girl, or noticed the promise she gave of beautiful womanhood.

She was a lonely child for one so bright and winning. Her friends were very few, not because of her condition, for poverty is all too common in Japan to be disgraceful, and many families of great rank have known its bitter pinch. It was rather because of a gentle, instinctive shyness that made her recoil from the often boisterous gayety of her

schoolmates. But one there was who held large place in her childish esteem. It was a friendship that began with her schooling. Her father had taken her to the school that first day, for Kokan had finished the primary grades and went to a different school in another part of the city. The master was a large, stern man, with solemn, forbidding face, and O-Mitsu-san was filled with fear. He took her into a great barren room, filled with hard, high benches where sat a multitude of other little boys and girls. He showed her a bench and told her to sit down, and when she took her place, the other children looked at her and whispered together and laughed. She was frightened, and presently, when the master, with a big whip in his hand, called her name in a loud voice, she put her head down on her hands and sobbed with fear. Then the other children laughed more and the master commanded silence in a voice that terrified her. She was very miserable and wished only to get away from that dreadful place and to go home again. By and by a bell rang, and all the children stood up and went out. But one little boy came to her and said shyly:

"Don't cry, little girl. Come and play."

After a time, when she had ceased to sob, she looked up into his round face and said:

"What is your name, boy?"

The boy smiled and answered:

"Soichi. Come and play."

Then they went out and played, and by and by, when it was time to go home, the little boy walked along with her and she was glad. His home was just around the corner from hers, in the fine big house in Azalea Street. He was a funny boy, for he asked her not to tell her father that she had played with him, or that he had walked part way home with her. When she asked him why, he would not tell, but said that some day she would find out, and that would be time enough to tell if she wanted to. Poor little Soichi! Already the boy was learning the hard lesson that old disgrace, however unmerited, cannot be put aside lightly, even by law, and the wise young head knew that the child of the Eta was no play-mate, in his world's eyes, for the daughter of a Samurai.

O-Mitsu cared not at all then. She knew only that he had been kind to her in her wretchedness, and she liked him loyally for



that, and loyally, too, she kept her promise not to tell. So they met at school and played, sometimes with other children but often by themselves. Thus several happy months went by and then O-Mitsu got her first great lesson in the new life of the nation. She found out about Soichi. There were plenty of children to tell when it seemed there was a chance of causing pain, for the Japanese child has no less a barbarian heart than many who live in the Western world. The little girl was greatly troubled. She liked the boy and enjoyed the games with him. But the daughter of a Samurai knew her position. She had learned now that the stern looks of the master masked a kindly heart, and her first fear of him was gone. To him she went in her perplexity.

"Why is it," she asked, "that the Eta boy comes to this school? Are not Etas outcasts?"

The wise teacher smiled gently and said:

"That was true, O-Mitsu-san, but it is not so now. Did you not know that the Emperor has promoted them, and given them the same rights as all the rest of us?"

"Then are they like us now?" she asked.

"Yes, child," replied the teacher softly, for he, too, was a Samurai and knew what was in the heart of his little questioner, "and because it is the Emperor's will they must no longer be treated as they were."

"I am glad," said O-Mitsu shortly, and went out into the yard to join the game in which Soichi had a part.

But when school was over and Soichi was walking toward home with her she kept silent for a long time. At length, raising her eyes and looking at him, she said:

"I know why now, Soichi."

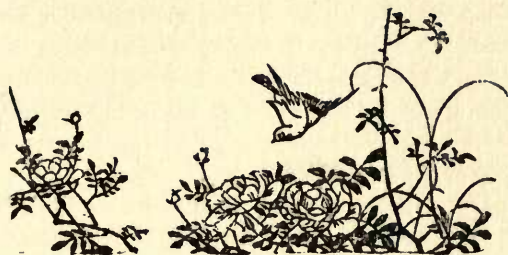
At once the boy stopped. The training of bitter experience prepared him to hear her proudly scornful decision. But when she was silent he dared at length to ask:

"Why do you not say it?"

But she smiled and answered:

"I do not care, and I will not tell. Teacher says it is right because the Emperor did it. Come, let us go home."





#### IV

**K**UTAMI the Commoner was fat and jolly. He lived well and put trouble behind him whenever it showed its ugly head. He liked to talk and smoke and visit with the friends who came often to his comfortable house to enjoy his hospitality. For though among the Samurai and the gently born the old prejudice against the Etas was far from extinction, among the Commoners there was little inclination to supercilious remembrance, especially when one had been so successful as Kutami. The visit of Jukichi to his house had had a

marked effect. Often since that memorable afternoon the wagging tongues of Kutami's friends had discussed the proud old man and his hard situation. Many a suggestion was made as to how it might be improved, but none which it seemed likely he would accept. The generous impulses of his admirers were barred by the stubborn pride they were not willing to encounter.

Life in many of its details is not so different in Japanese cities to what it is in the Western world. Neighbors gossip just the same, and pry out secrets and imagine motives just as they do among Occidentals, and just as often hit the mark. They knew Jukichi's ambition for Kokan, and how more and more doubtful of fulfillment it was becoming.

"How foolish he is!" said Komatsu, the cloth merchant, one evening when the subject had been discussed for the fortieth time. "With what he had from his pension he might have done many things, and been as rich now, perhaps, as Chobei here, who does not know what to do with his wealth."

"A curio shop, for instance," said Uchida, the ivory carver; "many Samurai have done that, and with his knowledge of such things



and his friends to help him get them, or to buy from, he might have made a great success."

"But instead of that he has only sold some of his own things for a child's price, and grows poorer every day!" Komatsu seemed as near to being disgusted as was possible for his good nature.

"How little you know him after all," said one of the group who until now had taken no part in the gossip. It was Matsumoto, a Samurai who had made his way in the very fashion outlined by Uchida, and whose advertisement, proclaiming his rank, is thrust into the hand of every foreigner who steps ashore at a Japanese port. But he had the native genius for trade as well as the insight into character which told him how utterly lacking it was in Jukichi. "He could never be a merchant," Matsumoto continued. "The world is just what a man's heart makes it. Kudosan would find only misery and hatred in becoming a trader, and would fail before he had thoroughly begun."

"Ah, that is true," cried Chobei, "that is quite the truth. I do not know what he could do."

"That is plain," replied Matsumoto. "He was a great swordsman in his day and has a fine reputation. He could give fencing lessons. He has taught his son, who already excels the other boys in school. Let him teach the sons of others."

That was a practical suggestion of which all felt the force. But the real difficulty lay in approaching Jukichi. There was plenty of talk about that, but the gossips went away without having reached a conclusion. A long time after his friends had gone Chobei sat with his little pipe, in deep consideration of the subject. In his abstraction he rapped so hard on the *hibachi*, knocking out the ashes, that O-Koyo came into the room to see what was the matter. There had never been many secrets between them, and now Chobei looked up and began at once to speak of the problem that was perplexing him.

"You know I have long been desirous of assisting Kudo-san," he said, "but have not understood the means to be employed. To-night Matsumoto-san has given me an idea. It is that he can teach fencing; but how shall we get him the pupils without his suspecting that we do it to help him?"

"We have one," replied O-Koyo. "We could ask him as a favor to teach our son."

"No, no," said Chobei, at once. "That would not do at all, for I have told him that Soichi is not to be a soldier, and he knows our son has no need of fencing."

"Well, then," said O-Koyo, "I do not know what to do. It seems to me that he is a very foolishly proud old man."

"Ah, yes," replied Chobei, "but he is one of those who belong to the old Empire and he cannot change. It is very strange and very hard."

"Hardest for his son," said O-Koyo. "How can that boy become an officer of the army without education, and how can Kudo-san give it to him? There is no school here and he cannot send the boy away."

As he listened to his wife speaking these words a new light dawned upon Chobei. He saw the way.

"We must make that school," he exclaimed, and drew in his breath so hard that it whistled through his teeth. "We will found a new one to fit boys for the Military Preparatory Schools, and Kokan shall have his education. Yes, yes! That is what we

must do! There shall be a place for Kudo-san. I will ask him myself. It will be a great honor to us if he will teach the fencing and swordsmanship. Then when his son must go away he will have something to meet the expense."

So the idea was born. There followed much thought and talk among Chobei's friends, and one day the local newspapers announced that the authorities had given permission to Mr. Kutami Chobei to establish a new school, which the founder agreed to maintain. It would be the link between the existing institutions of the city and those of the central Government. The courses were to be general, but there was to be special instruction for such boys as desired to fit themselves to enter any one of the six Government Local Military Preparatory Schools with a view to competing for a commission in the army.

It was the shrewd Matsumoto who had suggested this method of bringing the new school to the notice of Jukichi, and his reading of the old man's character was not at fault. Not a hint of the personal opportunity offered came to the Samurai as he read



the news in his paper. To him it was only another evidence of the patriotism of his neighbor, and he was about to set out on a second visit of congratulation, when a messenger brought a letter from Chobei. It was a very humble letter, as befitted the circumstance of a promoted Eta writing to a Samurai. The Commoner hoped that Kudo-san had heard of the projected school and that it would meet with his approbation. There were some matters concerning its administration and the courses of study to be provided, about which it would be a distinguished honor to him to consult with Kudo-san, and in view of the previous marked kindness, he dared to beg the condescension of an appointment. The advice of Kudo-san would be a very material assistance as well as a great honor.

Jukichi thrust the letter into the sleeve of his kimono and stalked around the corner into Azalea Street. There was a smile on Kutami's face when he saw how his bait had been swallowed, and he silently blessed Matsumoto for his inspiration.

"It is a great presumption for such as I," he said when the tea had been brought and

Jukichi's first congratulations were offered, "to think of undertaking such a work. No doubt it would have been better if some gentleman had been willing to do it. But, as it is, I am glad to have the opportunity. I have observed for some time, and with much regret, that many of the young men of the city have been obliged to go away to complete their preparatory education, especially those who mean to enter the army, and I hope this school will be able to remedy that fault."

Jukichi bowed in his courtly fashion and paused respectfully before replying.

"It is an honor to the city," he said at length, "to have so public-spirited a citizen."

With profoundest salute Kutami acknowledged the compliment and protested his unworthiness.

"There is very much to do," he said slowly, "and I am poorly fitted to make suggestions. I hope you will not believe me rude or unthinking if I venture to tell you it has been suggested to me that perhaps you yourself would be willing to help."

The trial was made, and Kutami sat with narrowing eyes, watching his visitor to note the effect. For a moment or two Jukichi sat

perfectly still, with face completely masking his feelings. Then he bowed deeply, with strong sibilant inspiration.

"I?" he said, with show of surprise. "It is an unexpected honor. I am quite unworthy to assist in so valuable a work. I do not know what I could do."

The Commoner breathed more freely. He had dreaded a fiery outburst from the hot-tempered old man, and when it did not come he could hardly conceal his relief. He felt that Jukichi's coöperation was more than half promised when it was not at once indignantly refused.

"Who in the city could do more?" he exclaimed. "Who could confer such honor upon so humble an undertaking?"

Jukichi did not reply. Since the day when he saw the struggle for the Restoration successful, the old man, still clinging fondly to the life of the old régime, had been nevertheless drifting unconsciously toward participation in the new. But he was yet far from open avowal, and the proposition of Kutami came to him with a shock. He saw, however, that he had opened the way for it himself, and merely asked to be excused from

giving immediate reply. Then with renewed congratulations and polite expression of good-will, he went away, leaving the Commoner uncertain but hopeful.

With genuine sorrow Kutami saw the Samurai pass through his gate unpledged. But he went on with the work, and soon the new building approached completion. Every detail was arranged but the most important of all. For Jukichi still declined to commit himself. If he failed to secure the Samurai, though he succeeded in all else, Kutami felt that the whole undertaking would fail. But he exhausted his ingenuity without success. The pride of his abolished caste still dominated the Samurai. It was an incident beyond the knowledge of either that determined Jukichi.

Jealousy is not the curse of race or rank. It finds its lodgment in the breasts of rich and poor alike, in Occidental and Oriental. It was O-Koyo who found the first evidence of it in a newspaper wrapped around a casual purchase, and with unconcealed emotion took it to her husband, reviling herself for being the bearer of ill news. Poor Kutami! Of all the hard thrusts and unkind blows of his



none too easy life this was the meanest and worst. It was a savage attack on his cherished scheme. The school plan had been devised in all sincerity, with the sole purpose of giving aid, without its being known, to the man who, he felt, had honored him by entering his house, and whom he greatly admired. But here he saw his honest, manly work scornfully derided, his simple purpose wantonly distorted and himself held up to ridicule more bitter than his bitterest outcast days had ever known. Every one could see what the real object of the new school was, said the paper. The spawn of the frog was hoping to be hatched out into eagles. But fine dress and large words did not hide the outcast. The Eta, though he clothed an army and built a thousand schools, was only an Eta. Law might call him a Commoner; it could not make him clean. Contamination was in all that he touched. Out upon the upstart with his vile wealth, who dared presume to offer schooling to the sons of men of birth!

With heart too heavy for words Kutami gave back the paper to his wife. The cruel blow seemed to have struck down at once his ambition and his energy. He sat like one

paralyzed and could neither think nor speak. And O-Koyo, tearing up the wretched paper in a frenzy of grief, as if thus to destroy the slander, threw herself down on the mat and sobbed aloud.

There was no fight left in Kutami. But Matsumoto, the curio dealer, with the old Samurai courage untouched in his heart, strove to inspirit his friend, and the building was finished. The Government officials had taken no notice of the attack on the founder, and the newspaper discussion provoked by it died away with no immediately discernible effect.

In the seclusion of his quiet home Jukichi had not heard the bitter denunciation of the new school. He was absorbed in the old problem of Kokan's future. The money he had received from the Government was almost at an end. His treasures were sold, his resources exhausted. Swayed to and fro by the currents of conflicting emotion he sat, still undecided, still reluctant to grasp the proffered relief.

From one of her old schoolmates O-Mitsu heard the story and told her father. The old man listened with flashing eyes, and when

she finished his decision was made. For himself he would not take the step, but to help another, even one who had been an Eta, appealed to his sympathy and his sense of honor.

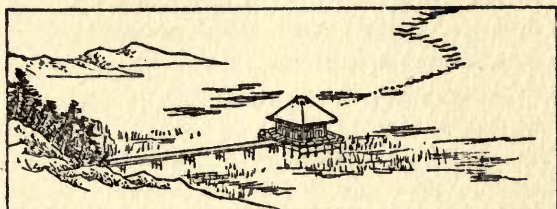
The day of the opening arrived, and then the result of the slander appeared. No pupils came to the new school. In painful embarrassment the governor of the Ken stood in the great, bare, main room and heard the pitiful words of unhappy Kutami presenting his gift to the city. Vain and empty sounded the pompous response. The teachers, gathered for their hopeful task, found nothing to do. The ceremonies were over. The governor and his officials turned to go away, glad the disagreeable business was ended. In the doorway stood an old man and a boy. With grave and dignified salute they waited while the governor passed out. Then into the building they marched and up to the office of the head-master. Five minutes later two students were duly registered and the new school was opened, with Kudo Jukichi and Kudo Kokan its first pupils.

Jukichi had committed himself at last, but the scandalous assault came very near to success. For several days not another pupil

appeared. Then the word went abroad that Kudo Jukichi, the Samurai, had registered his son, who was in daily attendance, and that Kudo-san himself had become instructor of swordsmanship. Men who had hoped to have their sons profit by the new institution, but who had been held back by cowardly apprehension, rejoiced at the relief, and some who secretly sympathized with the attack, and hated to see this evidence of the progress of the upstart succeed, were shamed into supporting it. The day was won for Kutami, and it was a victory infinitely sweeter than his bitterest calumniator could have imagined, for a reason of which scarce half a dozen persons in all the city had any inkling.







## V

**M**ORE and more as he grew older, young Kudo Kokan betrayed the haughty spirit that had characterized his ancestors. To him Kutamii the Commoner was still Chobei the Eta. With no hint of how intimately his own career was connected with the success of the new school, he was much opposed to having anything to do with it. But as the days passed, and others of his inherited standing filled his classes, his active opposition relaxed into scorn of the man and the institution from which he profited so much.

Boys are boys just as much in Japan as in

any other country, and must grow to manhood through the same struggles and with just as much exhibition of their native barbarity. It was in the second year of Kokan's attendance at the new school that Kutami entered his own son, who was preparing for a course at the university. Soichi was growing very tall and strong, fonder of sports and games, of military drill and marches than of books and hard study. Now for the first time he met the young Samurai. The early friendship with O-Mitsu had run its course of vicissitudes and pleasures, and seemed to have come to the fork in the road. As the girl grew older and learned more of the ways of her world, she came to understand more fully what had been intended by the little talebearer who first informed her of Soichi's social station. She saw the proud attitude of her father toward the Commoner, and her friendship with the boy was not mentioned at home. Apparently that was the only circumstance which distinguished it from scores of other boy and girl friendships. But the fact that it was not wise to say anything about it gave it a fictitious importance, and perhaps made it linger in a tenderer corner of the girl's recollection.

The appearance of Soichi at the school offered occasion to Kokan for the revelation of his least lovable qualities, and, boylike, he promptly showed them. He took delight in suppressed sneers and open snubs. And Soichi, being a boy of high spirit and no mean courage, cherished a sturdy resentment. Savagery is indigenous with most real boys. Before they have reached the age of reason it crops out persistently, whether their skins are brown or white, whether their eyes tilt upward at the corners or lie straight across the face. But it is of two kinds, merely exuberant spirits, impersonal, horse-playful, or vicious and vindictive. Kokan had no intention to be mean, but often pranks played just for the fun of it are none the less cruel, and what starts in good-natured play ends in deadly earnest. And Kokan misjudged the mettle of Soichi. He had the easy confidence of assured superiority and could not guess that beneath the jacket of the boy he often derided with the scornful name of Eta there beat a heart as stout as his own.

Unconsciously, too, he had a large advantage. For Soichi knew the secret Kokan did not, of the real reason for the founding of the

school, and at any time could have given his tormentor a thrust that would have brought his insolent pride abjectly to the dust. Not many American or European boys would have stood proof against such a test, for they are not trained in the ideas of filial obedience and loyalty, that are the inheritance of the Japanese. Soichi knew that a single word from him would end his persecution, but at the same time it might be the ruin of all his father had tried to do, and he held his tongue. And, because he thought he dealt with unresisting putty, Kokan went from bad to worse. The taunt that had been but a joke at first became a thing of venom, and his easy, indifferent contempt began to grow into something almost hatred.

How little beyond their noses most boys can see! Kokan came to believe there was no flint at all in Soichi, for try as he would, he could not strike fire. Then came the thunderbolt.

The year's work was almost finished. A few days more and Kokan would be graduated. It was with a sense of great relief that Soichi saw the end so near. It had been a bitter year for him. Not only had Kokan's taunts and



persecution strained his endurance almost to breaking; it had cost him the sympathy and friendship of many of his fellows, who misconstrued his silence and had come to believe with his tormentor that he was a boy of no spirit. He thought it all over by himself and a great resolve came to him. As he walked alone to the school one morning he planned his course. Let the result be what it might, his mates should see that it was not fear that had kept him from open resentment.

The bell rang and the boys came trooping in from the playground. Standing aloof, Soichi watched until he saw Kokan. The Samurai boy walked briskly, talking light-heartedly with two or three companions. To enter the building he must pass close to the spot where the Commoner stood. Soichi waited until Kokan and his friends were but a few feet away, then stepped directly in front of them, and turning his back, walked slowly toward the door. Instantly Kokan understood that a crisis had come. For a moment he was too amazed to speak. Then he shouted:

"What do you mean, Eta? Get out of my way!"

Soichi made no reply, and stepped more

slowly than before. Kokan was almost on his heels.

"Jump, dog!" the young Samurai shouted in sudden anger; "jump before I kick you!"

For answer Soichi turned and without a word slapped him smartly across the mouth with the flat of his hand.

A moment Kokan stood like one turned to stone. It was as if the blow had paralyzed every faculty, not by its force but by its shock. Then in wild fury he sprang forward, his hands outstretched as if to clutch and tear to pieces the boy who had dared to strike him. Soichi was ready. In strength and stature he was quite a match for his frantic antagonist; but it needed no force to meet that furious rush. Swifter than sight his hands went forward, caught the arms reaching out to seize him, and with a single twitch hurled the Samurai boy bodily over his head. Then like a cat he whirled to meet a new attack. It was a trick he had often played on the practice mats of the gymnasium, where not in vain had he worked that year with the master of jiu-jitsu.

Dazed by the force of his fall Kokan struggled to his feet, mad with rage. Fortunate then for them both that the wearing of swords



Hurled the Samurai boy bodily over his head.





was no longer the Samurai's privilege, else Soichi would have been killed in his tracks. But if passion had blinded Kokan, his friends could still see, and before another wild rush should give Soichi a second opportunity they had seized both boys and held them apart. In another moment the master, who from the doorway saw and heard it all, had reached them, and discipline was beginning to work.

"He insulted the Emperor and I struck him," said Soichi calmly, when they examined him. "If I had had a sword I should have cut him down."

"What?" said the master, "insulted the Emperor!"

"It is false!" cried Kokan, restored to outward calm, but with heart burning with hatred. "I did not!"

"He called me Eta," retorted Soichi, "and the Emperor has decreed that there are no more Etas."

Before that reasoning even Kokan was silent, and because he was Jukichi's son the master found a way to let the matter drop.

Soichi had given a proof of his spirit, which every boy in the school was ready to accept. He had won his point, but the young Samurai

went away to his military school with a bitterness rankling in his heart it was to take years to cure. The quarrel had its effect in the house in Timber Street no less than in the home of Kutami. Jukichi at once left his place as instructor and opened classes of his own. It did not matter. The work for which the school had been founded was done, and the Commoner, grieving that it had come to such result, nevertheless was satisfied, and more than ever proud of the son who had shown both his courage and his patience.





## VI

**T**HE period of "Little Plenty" was wearing to its close. Already the wistaria blossoms were fading and the gorgeous azaleas were dropping their petals. In the fields the barley heads had turned to yellow and the young rice in the seed beds stood tall and strong in its thick green rows awaiting the harvest that should make room for it. It was a day when even nature rested and basked in the smile of heaven. The sun shone as if pouring the accumulated experience of millions of years into each moment, saturating earth and trees and

flowers and grass with a deluge of molten gold. The vast blue arch gleamed like a great aërial mirror, reflecting the wide expanse of motionless sea that lay shimmering in the sunlight, unmarked by a single ripple. On its sleeping surface myriad fishing boats, with dull gray hulls and red brown sails, drifted and dozed. The noisy calls of the city were hushed, and to the girl sitting among the trees on the crest of the pine-clad cone beyond the end of Timber Street there rose only now and then a muffled sound, like the dull roll of surf on a far-distant beach. Only life that was wild sent its challenge to her. Natsuzemi shrilled his strident ji-i-iii from the branches over the Shinto shrine in vigorous chorus, as if determined to make the uttermost of such a day, and Min-min-zemi chanted his ritual over and over from scores of trees, singing the prayer that has no end.

Six years had more than fulfilled the promise of her childhood for Kudo O-Mitsu. At eighteen she was the full-blown flower of which at twelve she had been only the bud. Such an one she was as would set the hearts of half a city a-throb by a single glance, even a city where men care not overmuch for



maidens, and passion is rarely of the tender sort until years of association have coddled it into flame. Her face was a long, narrow oval, the stamp of her gentle birth, exquisitely curved from cheek to chin and rounded to the delicate point that emphasized her beauty and yet revealed her determination. Narrow at the top and broadening to the temples, her ivory-white forehead disclosed the outline of beloved Fujiyama, the sacred mountain of her race. The full lips of her little mouth were brilliant with the stain of luscious cherries. Above a great mass of shining, jetlike hair gleamed softly the green jade of the ornaments that betrayed her years.

She sat leaning a little forward, the slender fingers of one hand half supporting, half caressing her chin, and gazed dreamily out at the splendid pageant of sea and shore spread before her. But its beauty was not in her thought. The wonderful shimmer of the opalescent water, now heliotrope, now tan, now pearl, under the rapturous rays of the afternoon sun, the soft blue of the roofs rising here and there through the brilliant green of the verdured hills, had now no charm for her. The melancholy note of the wild dove,

calling sweetly from the deep recesses of the pines, suited more her mood. For trouble had come to O-Mitsu, of a kind she did not know how to meet. Chukei, the *nakodo*, the professional matchmaker, had called to see her father.

To the old Samurai, hardly less than to the girl, his message had come with a shock. For as unconsciously as she had grown to womanhood, so unconsciously had he seen her grow, with never a thought of the demand for her that time was certain to bring. The son of whom he was so proud was gone to the army. That year he had received his commission and joined his regiment. The red cap-band of the Guards was a badge of honor for Jukichi, and he dwelt lovingly on the future of the young officer who had begun his career by winning appointment to the proudest service in the land. But the old man missed the boy, and honor could not entirely fill his place in the lonely house. It was the girl who brought sunshine into Jukichi's daily routine. The classes and the lessons that had earned their humble subsistence still occupied part of his time, but the old man had lost his zest for them, and his urgent need had passed. Ko-

kan's pay was enough for them all considering their simple way of life, and Jukichi, feeling his years, was beginning to contemplate the time when he should resign his cares, and as *inkyō*, live out his days in rest and peace.

In all such dreams O-Mitsu had her share. Jukichi did not mean deliberately to keep her from the marriage to which every Japanese girl looks forward, but he put the thought of it from him as unpleasant, and Chuhei had forced it on him against his will. He turned the *nakodo* away with evasive answer and scant encouragement. Then for hours he sat thinking of the girl and her future. After supper, when she brought his pipe, he said:

"I have received a proposal of marriage for you."

She put down his tobacco pouch and sat still, a sudden clutching about her heart as if of suffocation. For some time Jukichi said nothing more, then he added:

"Chuhei-san, a *nakodo*, has been here to see me about it."

"Ah," she said, with a pitiful little effort to smile. Her father had given no hint yet of his own feeling, and she dreaded what was

to come. She was not prepared for this. She had not thought of it. Kokan and her father had made up her world, and she did not know what to say. The old man sat looking at her fondly, and for a few moments neither spoke. Then he said slowly:

"Yamomoto-san, the silk merchant, makes proposal on behalf of his son."

She smiled again, and with better will, for somehow she found relief in the words and manner of speaking. Besides, she did not know the young man who had honored her, and she began to feel that perhaps her father might not consent. She had no wish to marry, and she was not the girl to do so simply for the asking. At length, as her father said no more, she plucked up courage, and bowing deferentially to him, said:

"I do not wish to marry yet. It is better for me, if you will, to live here with you until perhaps Kokan shall bring you another daughter to keep the house."

A smile of pleasure lighted the old man's face.

"Ha," he said, "it is as I wished you would feel."

Then, if he had been an Occidental, he



would have kissed his daughter, and heart to heart they would have talked until the matter was settled. But deep and true though affection may be among the Japanese, it finds small show in outward expression, and caresses are signs of weakness.

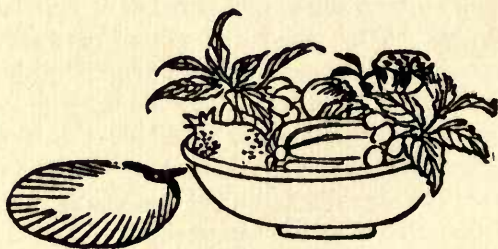
"I have made no answer," he went on, after a little. "I had no will to have you marry if you were not ready."

His hand moved a little as if to touch her arm, and his eyes glistened with unusual emotion.

"I will tell Chukei-san."

That was all. The incident was ended; but the girl, wiser by instinct than her father, although without experience, marked it for the beginning. What was it that stirred her heart in protest so strangely and so strongly? She did not know. The ghost of some long dead experience, perhaps. The wood dove in the trees behind her called plaintively to its unseen mate. The sun slid down the western heaven and threw his long rays caressingly over her, face to face with a world-old perplexity. Why should she be sad at the prospect for which other girls longed? It was the pleasant home-life with her father, and the deep, quiet home

love, she thought at last; life and love that knew no change. That was the way she wished to go on, and with a sudden blaze of anger she hated old Chukei for his unwelcome interference. Gradually her mind recovered its old poise, and she saw the course she would take. Her father's attitude was her good fortune. As long as he continued in that mood the menace was shorn of its power, and after that— The huge red sun splashed into the flaming sea, and with its parting fire flashing back from her lambent eyes she rose and started down the winding path toward home.





## VII

**T**HERE was joy in the house in Azalea Street. Soichi had come home. His work at the university was finished, and despite his dislike for study he had taken high place in honor of the father who wished him to. Now he had returned to make a beginning in the career Kutami had planned for him. But for a time there was to be no work. Father and mother and son were to play a little together and give rein to the pleasure of the reunion. After that the new venture would take all the effort of both men.

Kutami intended to branch out. The old business was good enough for him, but the son was worthy of something better. He should be a banker, and already the Commoner had arranged with some of his wealthy business associates for the founding of the new institution which should give Soichi his opportunity. The friends who gathered at the comfortable house to celebrate the joyful return of the young man, discussed the new project with unflagging enthusiasm, and all predicted a proud success for Soichi. The sake cups were often exchanged and many cigarettes perfumed the air. There was no flaw anywhere.

It was the next afternoon that Kutami, trudging along through Timber Street on his way back from his office, and turning over in his mind his plans for his son, passed the house of Jukichi. A drizzling rain was falling, but the Commoner, secure under the wide shelter of his yellow, oiled-paper umbrella, cared nothing for that. As he passed the gate of the Samurai a gust of wind swirling through the street tilted the umbrella sharply back, and Kutami glanced up just in time to see old Chuhei, the matchmaker, coming out.



"Oho!" he said, as he saw the middleman, "a wedding, eh? I wonder what lucky young fellow it can be who is to have Kudo-san's daughter for his wife."

He paused for a moment, looking after the *nakodo* as he strode toward the city, then turned and went on. It was no affair of his after all, and before he had reached his own home he was back again in the absorbing subject of Soichi and the new bank, and had forgotten all about Jukichi's daughter.

Shrewd old Chukei had met a puzzling rebuff. The circumstances were everything that to his mind foreshadowed a successful negotiation. But he had been sent away with almost no explanation. The *nakodo* shook his head and plodded along, wondering what to do.

O-Mitsu was happy. Not soon again, she thought, would this particular middleman return to her father's house with his annoying business. With unwonted lightness of heart she went about her work. Then when the rain ceased and the sun came out, she stepped out into the yard and on the tall *getas* that guarded her dainty feet from the mud, took her way up the path toward her favorite spot

among the pines by the old shrine. The world was greatly changed for her since last she looked out upon that familiar scene. The sails of the fishing-boats bellied out under the fresh breeze, the spray dashed over their bows, the trees swayed and nodded, everywhere was life and activity. The whole world sang and her heart with it.

She stood a long time gazing down at the spreading sea, quite unconscious that another had climbed the steep path, one who now found even a more entrancing picture before his eyes than the wonderful view below them. It was Soichi, come to visit the old shrine. All unprepared for the vision that came so suddenly before him as he turned to look down on the well-remembered shore, it was hard to stifle his admiration and surprise.

Leaning a little against a gnarled old pine, she stood motionless, her strong profile and the exquisite curve of her chin revealed unwittingly to him as he paused, half concealed by a clump of trees. Back over the years since he had seen her, the rush of memory took him to that day when she had told him that she knew his secret. He saw her again standing in the road and bidding him, with a smile, come on

with her. And now that little girl was this beautiful woman! She had not changed, and yet she was all changed.

Slowly the tide of emotion swelled within him. He could not remember that he had ever thought she was a pretty girl, and in the years he had spent at the university he had scarcely thought of her at all. He had seen many pretty girls there, but never had one affected him like this. Now he saw at a glance that she was wonderfully beautiful, and the more he looked the more wonderful she became. It dawned on him that she was much the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and immediately he had an almost irresistible longing to go to her at once and tell her so.

An unhappy thought of himself restrained him. They were no longer schoolfellows. She was the daughter of a Samurai and he—Poor Soichi! Not even his university life had taken from his own consciousness all taint of the old disgrace. He did not know, because he had had no experience, that love is *heimin* as well as *shizoku*, a Commoner as often as a Gentleman, and that there is never advantage in loving a girl unless you tell her so.

He moved a little, and a snapping twig told

her that some one was near. She turned quickly and their eyes met. A long moment they stood so and neither spoke, yet in that moment the whole world changed for each of them. Under his steady gaze she felt the blush come tingling up her throat and spread across her cheeks. Like one grown fast to the ground on which he rested, he stood and only stared. His brain refused to act, his tongue to work. Then she moved, and the spell was broken.

"O-Mitsu-san!" he cried, and tone and glance told all he would have uttered.

With all her face rosy with warm blood she gazed fearlessly back into his eyes, and murmured softly a single word, yet one instinct with the feeling of a thousand.

"Thou," she said, in the old familiar language of their childhood.

Even as eyes and look had spoken for him when voice and tongue were mute, so had she answered. His ugly doubts of himself fled at first sight of her smile and it was the old Soichi who sprang forward to her side. A thousand questions trembled on his lips and struggled in vain for utterance. His unruly tongue refused its function, and he stopped in confu-



sion, even his bold eyes falling before her smiling glance. It was the girl, older than he in such matters by hundreds of years of heritage, who said lightly after a little pause:

"I did not know that you had come home."

A dozen emotions fought together for expression, but all were crowded back, and he answered in commonplace:

"I have been here nearly a week."

"So long?" she said, questioning.

He fancied he caught a note of reproach in her tone, so far had his self-esteem come back, and a pang of regret crossed him at the thought that he had lost those days.

"I am a fool," he said irrelevantly, but with air so dejected that one far less clever than she would have followed his thought.

She laughed merrily, and the sound of her voice completed his undoing. He was back to elemental simplicity again, and the passion that was uppermost in his heart came bursting out with truthful bluntness.

"You are the most beautiful woman in all the world," he said.

Again the blush swept across her face and the long lashes fell over the merry eyes. The flood-gate of his speech was lifted at last. The

torrent of his emotion flowed forth with the rush of waters long pent up, telling her the ancient story he had known all his life, but which only that last quarter hour had revealed to him. And the girl, listening with fluttering heart, heard more than he said, for he was answering the question she had asked herself, and she understood now her hot protest at the message of the *nakodo*.

They sat down by the great rock on the far slope of the hill, where the thick pines screened them from the view of visitors to the shrine, and where the sea lay blue, strong, and peaceful below them. For an hour of which no power ever could rob them, heart was laid bare to heart. Innocently, simply, with the peace of the glorious day, they prattled of the wonder that was theirs, the discovery they alone of all the world had made, and never a thought cloud floated across their heaven to disturb the serenity of its sunshine.





### VIII

**I**T was a good thing for Soichi that he had received the proper Japanese training in emotional self-repression or he certainly would have betrayed his secret very soon after his return to the house in Azalea Street. It not only filled him to the overflowing point; it enveloped him roundabout. He was drowned in it. Only the strong force of habit saved him, and the preoccupation of his parents prevented them from noticing his sudden distraction and absent-mindedness. Four days went by, two so long that night seemed never to come, and two so short that he remembered of each nothing but the blissful hour when

he had seen O-Mitsu. They had lived over again the past and drunk the joy of the present. Then came the specter. Boys and girls who fall in love in Japan, where the *nakodo* does most of the wooing, have even less chance than Western lovers for the proverbially rare smooth course of affection. And when he is of such humble descent as Soichi and she the daughter of a Samurai, that little chance is very small indeed. But they were true Japanese and had no lack of courage. They looked their trouble squarely in the eyes and questioned only how to meet it.

"Do you remember the teacher who frightened me so that first day at school?" she asked, going back again to the beginning of all things. "When they told me first that I should not play with you I asked him if it were so. Do you know what he said?"

"Yes, I know," he answered, a little sadly, for he saw how always the specter stood between them.

"He was a Samurai," she went on, "and he knew. He said the Emperor had destroyed the old distinction and we were all alike."



"Yes," he replied, "before the law. But there are some things that not even the Emperor's law can reach."

"Treason!" she cried lightly. "The Emperor's law reaches everywhere and touches everything."

He looked at her with a smile. "Do you think," he said, "that the Emperor wishes us two to be married?"

Her eyes dwelt fondly on his face, and she answered bravely:

"He wishes the old barriers to be utterly thrown down and all his people to be one."

The picture of that day at his father's school when he had asserted his manhood came back to him with a rush.

"Ah, yes," he said soberly, "that is true. Perhaps it might have been, but I spoiled it."

"Thou?" she said, using again that fond expression that sent the blood surging through him.

"I struck your brother," he answered. "Perhaps but for that——"

"No, no!" she cried. "I know about that. It was right. There would have been no hope if you had not done it. You do not know Kokan, how proud and hard he is, how he de-

spies fear. He thought you were afraid of him, and he hated you for it. If you had not shown him you were not, and—and this had come, he would have killed you.”

“Perhaps,” he said coolly.

His tone startled her. It was only a little, after all, that she knew of men, and there was a side of Soichi that she did not suspect, because of the difference in their training.

“Ah, but he would,” she declared earnestly. “You do not know how quick and hot his temper is.”

“Perhaps I should have killed him,” Soichi answered. “It would have been a fight, not a murder.”

The words surprised him almost as much as they did her, but for a different reason. That he had said them to her was the wonder to him; that he should have the feeling they disclosed was her amazement. It was the spirit of the Samurai, the spirit that all her training told her belonged only to them, and yet he revealed it as lightly as if it were a thing of supreme indifference, a commonplace, the matter-of-fact possession of every man. A new joy came to her with the unexpected knowledge, and instantly new hope

sprang up, vague and undefined, but none the less profound. Somehow, some way this unimagined quality in him would throw down the hateful barrier of prejudice and set them free. There was a deepened tenderness in the eyes that answered his gaze.

"You said there would have been no hope if I had not done that," he went on, after a little. "Did you think Kokan would ever forgive that blow?"

"He is brave and true," she answered softly, "even if he is proud and scornful. Too brave himself not to admire bravery in another. He thought you were afraid, but now he knows and in time his anger will die away."

"You do not know him so well, I am afraid," he said. "To be struck by one he despised so much was an insult he will never forget or forgive. Hope, for us, must count on something else, yet we must not be without hope. You know the saying, 'Even a calamity, if left alone three years, may turn into a fortune.'"

She was strangely happy again. It seemed quite natural now that they should face hopefully forward. She looked out over the

shining sea and began to build dreams, queer dreams that left the Now by unknown paths and reached the Then by unmarked roads. But always they arrived there, and it was a country of unclouded happiness where she and he lived in perfect peace. A long time he sat silent, watching her with eyes that signaled his mood. At length she turned to him with a little sigh.

"I must go home," she said. "My father will say I stay very long at the shrine and go very often."

"So long a time and yet so short," he said, and rose to his feet. An unpleasant thought crossed his mind and she saw its shadow.

"What is it?" she asked.

"To-morrow the work at the bank begins," he replied, "and I must go there."

"Well," she said, "are you not glad of it? It is an honorable occupation."

He gave her a puzzled, sorrowful look that brought a peal of merry laughter.

"Is it so bad as that?" she asked.

"When I go to the bank I cannot come here," he said gravely. "Then when shall I see you?"



At once her own face fell. "You are here now," she said, "and that was enough. I did not think of to-morrow."

"Not merely to-morrow," he rejoined, "but all the days after that."

"Two," she answered lightly; "there will be always two in seven. We can thank the new ways that have brought us Saturday and Sunday."

"Yes, two in seven," he responded, so gloomily that she laughed outright.

"Greedy!" she cried. "Know you not that the avaricious man prepares his own downfall? How much better are two days than none, as it has been so long?" She held up her slender fingers and made as if to count the years he had been away. "And for the other days," she went on, "there are paper and ink and brushes, when one knows how to write."

She was too happy at her new discovery of him to let so small a matter as this conjure up clouds. He caught the contagion and her smile chased away his frown.

"Good thought!" he said. "Now I know why that troublesome art was taught me."

So, laughing and jesting, they started

down the hill. They had almost reached the bottom when a new difficulty arose.

"If I send you a letter," he said soberly, "will not Kudo-san know it?"

She had thought of that, too, only it did not disturb her.

"In the roof over the gate," she said, "there is a split in the shingle. Underneath one could easily leave a letter that would never be seen unless someone should look for it."

But he, more practical, at once objected. It would be tempting fate to leave their letters where any day her father might so easily find them. If he should chance to look over-closely at the gate, or perhaps to have it repaired when a letter was there, discovery would be certain.

"If you do not enter the tiger's den," she said, "you cannot catch her cub."

"Oh, yes," he answered; "if one is patient by and by the cub will come out. There is a better place. In the corner of the yard by the plum tree there is a big bamboo post in the angle of the fence. To-night, after dark, I will make a cap for it, and in the hollow beneath shall be our letter box."

"Yes," she said, "that is best."

Satisfied of his skill and ingenuity she gave him her prettiest bow and a radiant smile, and moved down the path toward Timber Street. He watched until the far turn shut out from his view the dainty figure in its silver-gray kimono and iris-violet *obi*, and then thoughtfully took his own way homeward.

It was in the time of "Little Heat" when Soichi fitted the cap to the post. So cleverly he did his work that no one could tell, except by the closest examination, that there was a seam in the bambòo. On the inside he made a deep groove in the post and fastened a tongue to the cap so that it should fit tight always in the same place and never betray what had been done. Often, after that, he would watch his chance and when no one was in sight slip up to the post and stealthily lift the cap to take out or put in a letter.

The days passed swiftly, in spite of his inability to see O-Mitsu, for the work at the bank was new and hard, and as the business prospered there was much for him to do. So *Handon* and *Donkatu* (half Sunday and Sunday), as the country people still call them, came around more quickly than he had

thought, and nearly always they had contrived to arrange a meeting. Oftenest it was at their favorite big rock back of the pines, where there was seldom a straggling sight-seer to interrupt them. But sometimes, on holidays and festivals, it would be at the big Buddhist temple; and that they liked less, for the crowd interfered, and it was difficult to find a secluded place or to have more than a few words together without observation.

The weeks ran on into months, and the period of the "Cold Dew" came all too quickly, with its short afternoons and early descending sun, that cut down their brief hour together and sent them home to write more letters. For the conversation of lovers is as never-ending in the Mikado's realm as in the less fettered courtships of happier lands, and there was always so very much between them that had to be said and answered.

And now a new, dread subject was looming up. All over the land traveled the same sinister whisper, and men said the Dragon was rousing himself, and talked of the terrible rustling of his great scales. The winds of war were beginning to blow lightly from the north, and far and near the people waited



anxiously to see if they could not be diverted. As time went on, and stronger and stronger came the hostile currents, more and more soberly Soichi and O-Mitsu discussed the darkening future. Much it meant to them, for Soichi would be a soldier. His last birthday had brought him to the age for conscription service, and although his university course would give him some exemption, he was not one to claim it, if the Emperor were engaged in deadly strife; nor indeed would O-Mitsu have him. As autumn dipped into winter the wrath of the people toward their great antagonist grew and deepened, and anxiety lest there should be war gave place to desire for it.

They were sitting again by their great rock one late fall afternoon when the grass was brown and dead, and through the bare branches that waved above the housetops the wind blew bleak and cold from off a sullen sea. They had talked of war and what it might bring to them. Each felt it would be the end of all their dreams, for a soldier's duty is to die for the Emperor, and Soichi would not come back when once he had been called to the front.

"It will be a very great honor for me," he said at length, turning from a long, silent look at the wide-stretching water.

She glanced up at him questioningly.

"It is the first time a Kutami has had the privilege of serving the Empire as a soldier," he went on, "and I shall be very proud to go. It has done a great deal for us."

She made no answer, but sat with her slender hands folded across her lap.

"Will you pray to Kwannon when I am gone?" he asked gravely.

"Yes, and to Shaka," she said softly.

"Ah, to him also," he returned; "yes, to him, too. We commit it all to Shaka."

The low-hanging sun warned them that their all-too-short hour was ended, and they started down the familiar path in silence. At the turn, where they separated, he paused, and she looked up into his eyes.

"To Shaka, too," he said, and strode on.





## IX

**T**HERE was plenty of work at the new bank, and Kutami divided his time between it and his old affairs. In the street one morning as he was going to the bank he came upon Chukei, the *nakodo*, of whom he had not a thought since that day he saw him at Kudo-san's gate.

"Good morning, Chukei-san," he said; "what young people are you trying to make happy now?"

"Not your son, surely," answered the middleman, instantly scenting the possibility of a

fortunate stroke, and bowing very low to make a good impression.

"Ho, ho!" cried Chobei, with a hearty laugh. "You are quite right. Surely not my son. He has no thought of marrying yet."

"Be not oversure," replied the *nakodo*. "One never can tell what is in the minds of these likely young fellows."

"That is so," returned the banker; "but I think I know my son quite well enough. I saw you coming from Kudo-san's house a while ago. That must have been a proposal for his pretty daughter?" He chuckled at his shrewdness in guessing.

Chukei was not much inclined to discuss his clients' affairs, but he was tempted by the hope of gaining a new one, and besides, he loved a bit of gossip.

"Yes," he answered grinning sheepishly, "and a very good proposal it was, too."

"Indeed," said Chobei, with neighborly interest. "I had not heard of the wedding."

"No, and you will not," replied the match-maker, a little sourly, for it always angered him to think of the good business he had lost because of O-Mitsu's refusal. "My proposal was not accepted."



"Dear me!" exclaimed Kutami; "that is very strange. Who was the man?"

"Yamamoto-san, the silk merchant," responded the *nakodo*. "His son is one of the finest young men in the city."

"Yes, indeed," said the banker, "I should think any man would be glad to have his daughter make such a fortunate marriage. What did Kudo-san say?"

"That was the greatest surprise," answered old Chuhei. "He said his daughter did not wish to marry."

"Well, well!" cried the banker. "Who ever heard of a girl refusing to marry when her father wished her too? Things have changed very much in Japan when that can happen."

"They have indeed," replied the *nakodo*. "Least of all would one have thought it of Kudo-san, but it is quite true. I have been there three times since summer, each time with a very excellent marriage to offer, and always it has been the same answer."

"I wonder what the reason can be," said the banker thoughtfully. "It is certainly very strange. Good morning, Chuhei-san," and Chobei went on to the bank, leaving

the middleman quite uncertain whether he had made a good investment of his gossip or not.

Jukichi's neighbors had not missed the visits of the *nakodo* to his house, and as he had only one daughter and there was no wedding, it was quite evident that several proposals for O-Mitsu had been rejected. It was whispered about, in Lower Timber Street, that it was the girl herself who had made the refusals. But if Jukichi had any regrets, they never appeared. He loved the spirited girl and her gentle ways about the house, and it mattered nothing to him if the neighborhood gossips talked of the scandal of a girl who dared disclose a preference of her own contrary to the wish of her father. Such a wonder might not be heard of again in all Japan. He did not care. He enjoyed his home and his ease, and she was the great factor in both.

Perhaps if he had been less fond, he might have been more suspicious. Yet it had not occurred to the simple Samurai that there could be reasons for his daughter's hot temper with the hopeful authors of Chukei's vicarious proposals other than her own demon-

strative desire to remain in the old home with him. The clever girl was shrewder than he guessed. But who shall follow the blind trail of Love and pick out his footprints with the certainty which may say, "There he stepped," or "Here he stopped," or "See where he ran!"

There was lively interest in the house in Azalea Street that evening when Chobei recounted his conversation with the *nakodo*. O-Koyo listened with the kindly sympathy that ever kindles the matchmaking maternal heart. As for Soichi, he heard with a growing feeling of impending disaster that made it difficult for him to conceal his emotion. O-Mitsu had never told him anything of this, and if she had been rejoiced at the discovery of qualities in him which she had not anticipated, it was his turn to be surprised at her ability to keep to herself a subject which she knew would be so disquieting to him. He got out his little writing-box and began a letter to her. O-Koyo sighed fondly as she glanced at the corner where he sat with his ink and brush, busily covering a long roll of paper with she knew not what words.

"Ah," she said, "if only one of the pro-

posals had been for Soichi perhaps she would not have refused."

"Hut!" cried her husband sharply. "Our son marry the daughter of Kudo-san! What can you be thinking of?"

"Why not?" she replied quickly, undaunted by his scornful look. "Strange things happen nowadays. Stranger than that have happened already, why not again? We are rich and they are very poor."

"Ah, yes," returned Chobei soberly. "That is true. But money is not so much yet, in Japan, and many more very strange things must come to pass before it is. Besides, we are Eta and they Samurai."

"No, no!" cried his wife, with unaccustomed daring; "we were Eta and they were Samurai. Now all that is ended, and you have the best cause to know it who were yourself associated so closely with this Kudo-san in the school. To be sure we are only Commoners yet, but who knows what may not come? If there should be war, what opportunities for advancement may it not bring? One who can do for himself what you have done may do a great deal more. Why should not you, or Soichi himself, win the promotion



that would make old Kudo-san glad to consent?"

She paused, excited and trembling, surprised at herself for making so much argument against her husband. Chobei sat looking at her in astonishment. Never before had she shown such feeling.

"Whatever is the world coming to," he exclaimed at length, "when foolish women can talk like that!"

He filled his little pipe and exhausted the pellet of tobacco almost at one puff. But Soichi said nothing at all, and went on making his brush fly like a dragon over the paper as if he had heard not a word of their talk. O-Koyo said no more, and her husband smoked furiously, rapping his pipe on the *hibachi* to knock out the ashes, as if he meant to smash it to pieces. At length Soichi rolled up his yards of affectionate ideographs and slipped them deftly inside the long, narrow envelope, with sprays of delicate pink cherry blossoms trailing over it. Then he went out into the night and stole down to the corner of Kudo-san's fence. Only the plum-tree saw him slip the cap of the bamboo post and lay his love letter carefully inside. Then

he strode off toward the path up the hill. His heart was in a tumult. Straight up to the old shrine he went, paused a moment before it, and hurried on to their trysting-place at the big rock. There he sat down, and a long time pondered the strange, exciting news he had heard that evening. When he returned he found his father still silently smoking rapid pipefuls and O-Koyo sitting beside him with never a word, her hands busy with sewing. As he entered Chobei looked up and asked:

"Where have you been?"

"I went out to walk," answered Soichi, "and climbed up to the shrine on the hill-top."

Perhaps it was his talk with the *nakodo*, perhaps it was the suggestion of his wife that had set Chobei to thinking definitely about the future of his son. Theretofore there had been only a vague recognition of the fact that sometime Soichi would marry. Now suddenly it came to him that the boy was grown to man's estate, that the condition he half dreaded, half expected, was already come. With the realization came back the mental picture of old Chuhei. It was time to look about them, he thought, to consider the pos-

sibility of finding a suitable mate for his promising son, and, perhaps, to employ the middleman. After a time Chobei put aside his pipe and began to speak of what he had been thinking. Soichi listened like the dutiful son he was, and O-Koyo heard gladly, for even if it were not to be the beautiful daughter of the Samurai, she would be happy to see the son of whom she was so proud well married, and the daughter in the house would make her cares much lighter. When at length there came a pause in which Soichi could speak, it was with an air of quiet unconcern that he said:

"But first I must do my service in the army. If war does come, perhaps there will be no need for Chuhei-san."

Then, because they were alone in their own privacy, where no outside eye or ear might see or hear, and it was not necessary to conceal their genuine emotions, they gave full rein to the expression of their sober feelings, and the mother, who would be proudly scornful of tears or outward show of grief if the time should come to send her boy to the hardships and hazards of camps and battlefields, gave the hot, protesting drops unheeded flow. But

Soichi showed the mettle that was in him, saying calmly:

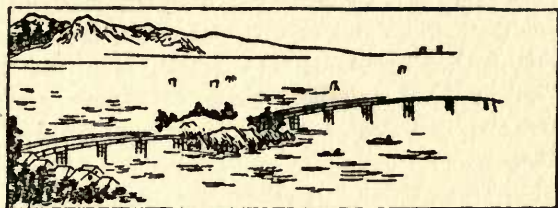
"But if the Emperor wishes it!"

Reverently the Commoner and his wife bowed at the mention of that name and the suggestion of his possible desire. There was no more loyal family in all his realm than they, and if he needed the sacrifice of all they had, and life itself, they had only to know his need to make the offering. The proudest opportunity life held was to die for him, and it was with heartfelt acquiescence that they heard their son add:

"Then I should be sorry that I had only one life to give him."







## X

**T**HREE times, he told my father, he had made offer of marriage for you, and each time it was refused."

Soichi looked down upon her where she sat by the big rock, and his black eyes shone with a great tenderness. She did not look up, but gazed away toward the sea and made no reply. All the time since she had read his letter she had wondered what to say to him. For she had wished earnestly that he might not know. There was trouble enough already for them, and it could do no good to

tell him. It could only add to his disquiet, and as it was they seldom met without some shadow of their specter falling over them. So she meant to bear this alone, and if by and by the barriers were destroyed, then it would add to their joy. But now it had come, through the foolish gabble of old Chukey. She looked up at him standing there, so strong and manly, and the sadness she saw smote her heart.

"Three times," he repeated.

The old roguish smile came into her eyes. "But none of them was from a banker," she said softly.

As always, she had only to seem merry to drive away his sober mood, and now the light-hearted answer brought its quick smile in return.

"But why did you not tell me?" he demanded.

"Thou art dull, Big One," she answered, "to ask me such questions. Surely thou must have guessed."

"I am not quick with riddles," he said.

Manlike he had but one way. He must know it all and she must tell. The intuition that would have conjured up the whole scene

for her was utterly lacking in him, and as she watched him, she saw the shadow settle on his brow that warned her of his shifting mood.

"For one," she said quickly, "how could I tell when you were not here, and thought so little of me you had not even told me where you were?"

He did not understand, and she laughed at his puzzled look. Then he saw.

"So long ago," he said, "before I came home?"

"Is it so very long?" she asked. "I do not remember. It seemed but yesterday I saw you here. How many years is it, man to whom it has been so long?"

He gazed at her bewildered. He was no match for her at such fencing of wits. He flung himself down beside her and said shortly:

"Have the kindness to explain, if you please. Do you not see how I am tortured?"

"No, no!" she cried, "not that! Were they not all refused? For what are you tortured? Ah, if you had been a woman you would have been taught in childhood how foolish it is to

admit jealous thoughts. Well, then, since you insist so much, the first one was refused—I did not know why. My father gave me my wish and I said No. Then one day I went to visit an old shrine I love very much, and I found out why. After that, with the others—there was no other reason. Now is the torture ended?”

He turned to her and the smile in his eyes was complete reward. “I am very glad,” he said.

“And very foolish,” she added softly.

“I wished very much to know,” he said after a pause. “To-morrow I am summoned to the temple for examination.”

“To-morrow!” she cried. She knew it was to come but had not thought it was so near. “To-morrow!” she repeated, whispering, as if to herself. “Are you glad to go? Perhaps you will not be taken.”

“Nay,” he said, “if there is war I shall be glad and proud, and if there is no war the time will soon be ended.”

“Very soon,” she said demurely, and made as if counting on her fingers. “When a few months may seem so many years how long will three years be?”



"Long enough for more refusals," he answered, and she laughed at the retort.

"But it is by lot that they are chosen," she said, "and it may not fall on you."

He smiled fondly at her eagerness and innocence. "Yes, by lot," he answered. "But your Samurai policemen know well where to make the lots fall."

She knew what he meant. Young men as tall and sturdy as he did not escape, even though the selection was by chance. There was a keen-eyed, patriotic, military intelligence that supervised the casting of the lots, and the girl, who gloried in his strength, foresaw the certainty that he would be chosen. Nor was he, in truth, unwilling to go. If it should happen that the wheel of the lottery left him free to stay at home, as it did some quite as fit as he for service, he would accept the result with a clean conscience. For brief and infrequent as were his opportunities for seeing O-Mitsu, even they would be lost if he were in the army. Thus far his loyalty and sense of duty to the empire let him go. Before the lots were drawn he could hope that they would miss him. When the decision was made, if he were taken he would set his heart

to his work with a will and devotion no tie of home, no merely personal consideration, would ever cause to waver for an instant. And of all who knew and loved him none would urge him on more eagerly than the girl. She was looking at him proudly as he sat before her, and it came to her that he was of the build and stature sought for throughout the empire for the distinguished regiments which had the honor of bearing the imperial name.

"You will go to the Guards," she said.

"Oh, no," he answered quickly; "I could not hope for such an honor."

"Honor!" she said with a smile. "It will be an honor to the Guards to have such a soldier."

That was too much and he laughed at the joke. "But I am not a soldier," he protested.

"You will be," she answered confidently. "There are some things about you, Big One, which you do not know yourself, but I know. Come, it is time to go. You must drink no sake to-night, and sleep well, to be ready for the examination."

There was plenty of company for Soichi at

the temple the next morning. All the young men of his age in the district had been summoned, and there was a clatter of eager talk among them as they awaited their turns with the examiners. But Soichi had little to say. He heard with amusement the boastful words of some who knew themselves to be at the threshold of distinction and honor, and he had a strange sympathy for some who hoped to escape. For himself, a night of agitated reflection, sleepless in spite of O-Mitsu's parting injunction, had brought him a day of calm indifference. He was ready for whatever might come. The businesslike surgeon, working rapidly but carefully, pronounced his verdict with prompt decision, and one after another was set free or sent on to the recruiting captain. At length it was Soichi's turn. The brusque doctor's eyes glistened as he saw the rippling muscles of the broad shoulders, and an exclamation of professional pleasure broke from his lips as he caught the rhythmic note of the deep breathing.

"Lungs like a bellows," he cried to his assistant.

Weight, height, and measurements were quickly taken, and with an enthusiasm he had

not displayed in many a day the surgeon called to the recording sergeant:

"*Ichiban*" (first-class).

Already Soichi knew his fate. His university degree would take the place of the recruiting captain's mental examination, and after that there would be only the certainty of the lots. It did not take the captain long to repeat the surgeon's "*Ichiban*," and as Soichi turned away from giving his record at the desk, he heard the recruiting officer say to the inspector major, who had just come in:

"There is one for the Guards. Just look at him."

O-Mitsu's judgment was confirmed, and he went home to await the notice of his selection, and to write perhaps his last letter to her. For he would not dare to write to her home when he was away, and they had no friend whom they would trust with their secret. It was a sober letter. There seemed little chance now that war would be avoided. Already men said that the throat of the Dragon had been touched, and throughout the Empire preparations were going on rapidly for the time when he should strike.

With simple directness Soichi told his



news, and spoke proudly of the intimation he had had that he should go to the Guards. There would be a few weeks of drill and preliminary work, he supposed, in the barracks at division headquarters in the near-by city, and it might be that once or twice more he should have the opportunity of seeing her before he went to Tokyo to join his regiment. After that would come the war and the battlefield. She would know he did not say it to boast, but he meant to do a soldier's duty. It would have been sweet, if there had been no war (he spoke of it as if it were already begun), to live on there with her, for in some way it would have worked out for them. But that was impossible now; a dream to be forgotten. The dearest wish of his heart was to die for the Emperor, and he prayed only that Shaka would permit him to meet his fate gloriously and with honor.

That was all. Not a word to her of the love that filled his heart. Not a message of hope or farewell, not a hint of constancy or patience. All that was behind him. His duty lay to the future and to the grim chance of war.

It was a raw, cold night, with a bitter wind

searching through the bare branches of the plum tree, and Soichi shivered as he lifted the cap of the bamboo post and thrust in his letter. Then he patted the cap back into place and turned away, nor noticed that a telltale corner of the envelope projected through the joint he had not closed tightly. And of all the evenings in the year, that was the one Jukichi chose to visit the plum tree.

Next day the notification came. Soichi had been selected for immediate service and was to go to the Guards. His record in the military work at school was such that the preliminary training at adjacent division headquarters would be waived and he would report directly to his regiment. He would start the following day.

He went to the bank and finished up his work there in preparation for indefinite absence. Then he wrote a little note to O-Mitsu, telling her the orders he had received, and started home. The early winter evening had fallen before he reached the house in Timber Street, and he stopped at the bamboo post to leave his note and perhaps to find a letter from her. He lifted the cap with excited eagerness and felt in the hollow.

There, sure enough, was a letter. He took it out with thumping heart and dropped in his own; then hurried around the corner home, impatient for light to read her words.

The first glance at the envelope sent a queer sensation of coldness through his heart, as if he had suddenly been struck chill. The writing was strange. The delicate characters of O-Mitsu, beautiful as the work of a famous artist, were replaced by the strong, heavy, brush strokes of an angry man. For an instant he stared at them with mind a blank. Then he knew. Someone had found them out. He stood as if paralyzed by shock, nerveless, inert, expecting some dire calamity. Then he tore open the envelope.

A single glance was sufficient to tell the story. The signature was the first thing his eye caught, and after that he could hardly see the other words. Those two dominated everything—"Kudo Jukichi"—her father! The new-clothed dignity of the law that made him a Commoner slipped from him like a kimono unfastened; the honor of his new service, the pride of his regimental assignment faded away, and he was again the Eta of the old days, outcast, despised, a very pollution. All

that he had done, all that his father had done, the position they had won in the community, the consideration of their fellows were made as nothing by the simple apparition of those two words.

But after a little the old inborn pride of race came back to him and he straightened up like a new man. He was one of whom the Emperor had deigned to think; what should he care what others said? What mattered it after all that her father had learned their secret? Nothing but that was changed, and sooner or later that must have come. He had done no wrong. He was not changed. The law that had given him citizenship was still the law. The Emperor's care was over him. It was his Sovereign's wish that he was what he was. He took new heart and began to read the letter. His brain was cooler now. In the mental numbness that followed the first shock he had felt only a vague terror of the fury of Kudo. But as he read, the words that had seemed so awful in anticipation lost some of their dreaded force. The wild outburst of rage was not there, but in its place a cool, fine sarcasm that cut as if the Samurai who wrote had wielded his sword instead.



A curious calm possessed him as he finished the letter. The haughty pride of the Samurai, his bitter contempt for the "outcast" who dared presume to think of his daughter, his jeers at the "upstart trader" had lost their sting. It was a soldier of the Empire, a man of the Guards, who folded the letter and replaced it in its envelope. With a smiling face he met his father and mother and sat down to supper.

After the meal, when the pipes were brought out, he handed the letter to his father to read. It might as well be told now. His poor little secret, stripped of its veil, seemed very small and miserable. But he was going away to-morrow, and unknown to-morrow might do what it would with him. He listened unmoved while Chobei slowly read aloud the bitter, mocking words of the man for whom he had done so much. O-Koyo covered her face with her kimono sleeves and wept openly; but father and son sat with steady features and gave no sign, save that when the reading was ended the Commoner laid his strong arm across his son's shoulder in shy, unaccustomed caress, and said:

"My son! My son!" No more.



## XI

**T**HE bee stings the weeping face," they say in Japan, and Soichi proved the truth of the proverb. It was a queer little procession that formed at the house in Azalea Street to escort him to the railroad station whence the train was to bear him away to a soldier's life. A dismal rain was sifting down from the sodden clouds that seemed to hang just above the housetops. But the banner that set forth his name and the fact of his service was borne none the less proudly by his old school-mates, and the friend who carried the small bundle of his treasured belongings held his head none the less erect because he strode

through muddy streets. Already the Dragon was beginning to roar, and his voice rang from end to end of the land. It was a last farewell these friends were taking of the young soldier, and they honored him and envied the glory he would win. There was nothing to say. In silence the little company walked along. But as they passed the dilapidated old house in Timber Street, where the plum tree stood bare and desolate in the corner of the yard, Soichi, daring a hasty glance, raised his eyes for an instant to the balcony under the gable end. Just for a moment he looked, but that was enough to set his heart a-thumping as it had not done for many a day. For in that instant he caught, at a parting of the *shoji* (paper windows), a glimpse of a beautiful face and the flash of eyes undimmed by tears, that sent him a message of cheer and hope and constancy. His heart was strangely light as he trudged along behind his banner, and though the rain fell never so hard it was a day of sunshine for him.

Then came the weary miles of railway and the army. In the car he met some others going up to join his regiment, and talk of

peace and war beguiled the miles until at last the train pulled into Tokyo and in a few minutes Soichi was in barracks. The proverb of the bee and the weeping face came home to him when he was assigned to the company in which Kudo Kokan was a lieutenant, the old Kokan with the hot heart and ready insolence he knew so well.

"*Shikata-ga-nai*" (it can't be helped), said Soichi, and set himself to do his work with all his heart, as becomes a member of the Guards.

Fortunately for him there was much to do and not much time which Lieutenant Kudo could devote to personal animosity.

"Ha, the Commoner!" he cried with fine scorn when he first saw Soichi.

The young soldier wondered what would come next, but it was drill hour, and Kokan had no chance for private spleen. He was hampered now by the service, and the near, sure approach of war. It would not have surprised Soichi to see the lieutenant swing his sword in execution of the revenge he doubted not had been cherished all the years since that day at school. But he did not comprehend fully as yet the restrictions that hedged Kokan, and that first taunt of "Commoner" gave



no clew. It was strange, he thought, that the lieutenant had not said "Eta," but the hours of "goose step" and drill that followed left him no time to think of other things. He had been adept at such work in his school, but now he found that the intervening years had cost him much in facility and precision, and it was hard work to be always ready for the sharp command, to make himself again the machine needed for perfection. When it was over and he got back to barracks, he was tired out, ready enough for his rice and fish, and after that for his blankets. When he thought again of Kokan's taunt, there came to him also the recollection of his defense at the school and he understood. It had been passed over lightly then that he had accused Kokan of insulting the Emperor, but in the army it might not go so easily again. It would be indeed a serious charge for an officer to face. It made the boy smile as he recognized the new bridle on his lieutenant's insolence.

He understood now, also, that there would be no attempt at actual violence. For himself he did not fear. Man to man, with equal arms, he was ready to meet Kokan at any time. He dreaded disgrace far more than

death, and if Kokan should attack him the dishonor would affect also the lieutenant and all his family, and that meant that O-Mitsu would suffer. So he saw with deep relief the bearing of his officer, so different to what he had expected.

In scores of ways, however, the lieutenant found occasion to give Soichi a taste of his quality, and it was apparent that Kokan had been informed how matters stood at home. His first detail to guard duty brought Soichi a test. He had had time to canvass the whole situation and had reached his decision. He was a soldier of the Emperor and war was coming on. He would do his full duty always to the very utmost and no personal distraction or injury should deflect him. He would bear the injustice of Kokan without complaint, hoping only to win release by an honorable death in battle. But if the persecution became more than he could endure he would kill Kokan and himself.

From a course thus deliberately mapped out he was not the man to be easily turned, and so he was ready when Kokan came by, inspecting the posts, and greeted him with:

“So *hinin*!” (not human, outcast).

He brought his rifle sharply to salute, and held his head erect and his eyes steadily front as if he had not heard the insult or the instant correction to "*heimin*" (Commoner) of the cautious lieutenant. With searching eyes Kokan looked him up and down, examined his rifle and equipment, but could find no flaw. Then he demanded the orders and listened intently as Soichi repeated without a slip the instructions he had received. With a sinister smile the baffled officer passed on, and his victim knew that was only the beginning.

There was a different sort of smile on Soichi's face as he thought how his lieutenant had tried to catch him.

"If he keeps that up," he said to himself, "it will make me the best soldier in the regiment to be always ready for him." He nearly laughed aloud at the idea. "I might even win promotion. How angry he would be at that!"

The warning was valuable. Soichi kept himself ever on the alert, but in his heart he began to despise the Samurai. It was a petty, dishonorable trick he had played, saying *hinin* and then correcting himself. Kudo-san would never do such a thing, he thought,

and how O-Mitsu's pretty lips would curl in scorn if she knew. There was compensation, after all, for what he must endure. If he kept his own honor unstained Kokan could do him no real harm.

The days wore on with many little stratagems of Kokan to catch the Commoner napping. But Soichi, always vigilant, escaped. The endless preparations for active service hurried along and there began to be talk of the regiment being moved to a naval base, ready for transport oversea.

Suddenly from end to end a great hush fell over the land. It was as if the nation were crouching, ready to leap and holding its breath as it waited only the word to spring. War had come, and all men knew. The gossip ceased that had filled minds and mouths, and men went to and fro in solemn, awesome silence. Still there was no outward show, and the stranger who looked on with inexperienced eyes saw only the old round of trade and work and cheerful amusement, with never an indication of the dreadful business at last undertaken.

Then came the first sign. From mouth to mouth the whisper ran—the Reserves were



summoned to the colors. From never a house to which the fateful finger pointed came there a sound of grief or dismay. Gladly, quickly, but in silence and in the night the men responded. In twos and threes they took their way to their meeting-places and few they were who saw or heard. Town and city wore their placid air of peace. Even the winds of war, that had blown so roughly over the land, were stilled, as in ghostly stealth the nation answered the call.

In the middle of the night Soichi found himself in full kit marching swiftly to the station. No banners waved, no bands blared, no trumpets sounded. No throngs of eager friends gathered to give the men farewell. No loyal cheers encouraged them and urged them to duty's task. Through empty, silent streets, between houses barred and darkened, in the hush of a march to the grave, the regiment passed to the waiting trains. Noiselessly the men climbed into the cars and only the hushed, brief orders of the officers broke the stillness. No ring of bell or scream of whistle marked their departure. Morning dawned over a city ignorant of what had been

done, and only the Reservists coming to the empty barracks knew that the forward movement had begun.

In the corner of his car Soichi threw off his heavy pack and curled himself up in his great-coat. Near him no man spoke. In silent peace they lay wrapped in their own thoughts or already soundly asleep. Ahead, toward the center of the car, a little group gathered around the glow of their cigarettes and talked in subdued, but excited whispers. So they rumbled off down the road through the darkness, headed toward War.

With a tranquil mind Soichi lay in his comfortable corner and thought of what had happened and what was to come. He had no fear of the future. His only anxiety was lest he should fail unwittingly or his opportunity should not come. He belonged to the Empire. It had made him all he was, and now that it needed him he would give it cheerfully all he had of muscle, brain, or life. He had no expectation of coming back. That day he had written his parents his last good-by. He calmly and fully expected to die on the field, and was concerned only to make his death count for the most he could. He won-

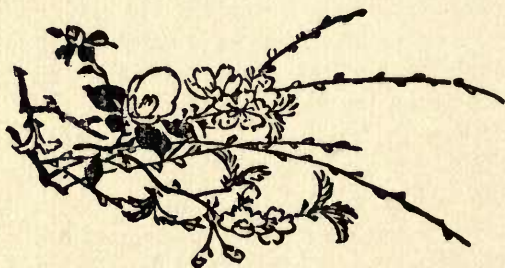
dered how the end would come, and hoped it would be in the first line of battle.

Yet not all the men would be killed! He knew that in the last war, when he was a boy, only a few, comparatively, died. By far the majority of them came back. What if it should be his fate to go through the dangerous trial and come out unscathed! The human heart within him leaped at the thought, and his mind came back with a start to the letter from O-Mitsu he had received only that afternoon. He smiled now at his surprise in getting it. He had not thought it possible that she could write to him. In his inability to send letters to her it seemed, of course, she could not reach him. He had even thought she did not know where he was. Kokan must have written home about the new member of his company and unconsciously given her the information he, most of all, would have withheld. Soichi laughed at the thought of such a trick for fate to play on the imperious lieutenant.

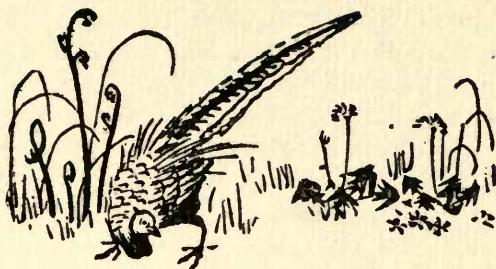
There the letter was now, safe in his pocket, and he felt again, as he touched it, the thrill with which he had read her good-by; the simple straightforward statement of her unchanging love for him, and how, after her

father's discovery of his letter, there had been a scene of terrible anger; how she had braved him with the point of her dagger at her heart and told him she would never marry. The man for her was a soldier, as befitted the daughter of a Samurai, and now her soldier was going away to die for his country and hers. So then, good-by. He was a soldier and would do a soldier's duty.

Yes, he would do a soldier's duty, he had no doubt of that. But suppose after doing it to the utmost limit, life should still remain? Ah, that would be the last crowning stroke of cruel fate. Even her constancy held out no promise to him. The honor he coveted waited in a sable cloak on some unknown battlefield. He shut his heart to other hope.







## XII

**T**HE winter wind whistled drearily through the rigging as the transport came to anchor, and the men shivered with cold in spite of their heavy, fur-lined coats. The business of war was begun in earnest now, and Soichi and his fellows bustled about the ship making the final preparations for debarkation. At last, with kits tightly packed and every article carefully stowed, so that nothing should be lost, they stumbled down the gangway and into the boats. The transport lay far off from the shallow beach and it was a long hard pull for the shore. A great bonfire was their beacon, for they were landing late at night,

and the search lights of the war ships that had conveyed them lighted up their course. With his cap pulled down on his head as far as it would go and the fur collar of his overcoat turned up about his ears, Soichi stood wedged among his mates. The keel touched and into the icy water they plunged waist-deep to wade ashore.

That was but the foretaste. They stood around the fire they soon had blazing, warming their aching feet, drying their clothes, and talking of what was ahead. They had said good-by to transportation. Now the miles they had to cover would be made on their feet, and many a man looked ruefully at the heavy, unaccustomed boots and wondered how he should endure the march. Soichi found his muscles put to a new test. It was one thing to drill for hours in the barracks square and quite another to march for hours along a frozen road carrying his heavy kit.

It was bitter cold, far colder than he had ever known it in Japan, and the big fur-lined overcoat, although it kept his body warm, hampered his legs in walking and made him very weary. It was with the utmost effort,

when he went on sentry duty after a hard day on the road, that he could keep awake, and he thought regretfully that he was not doing his full duty, because only the fear that Kokan would catch him kept his eyes from closing.

No, it was not at all like barrack life. There the rice and fish and pickles were always ready when the day's work was done, but often now they had to wait for hours, far into the night sometimes, for the big kettles to come up and the rice to be boiled. And now there was no sake. Such supplies as that could not keep up with the march, and though occasionally some of his comrades managed to get a bottle of beer or two from some terrified Korean as they passed or camped in a village, Soichi dared not risk it. It was only another chance for Kokan.

That young man busied himself with seemingly increasing vigor, watching to trap his victim in any slip. But day by day he saw Soichi's own prediction being verified, and the sturdy young fellow becoming always a better soldier, until other officers began to remark it and Kokan was obliged to conceal his wrath under a smiling assent.

They left many weary miles behind, and

now excitement began to grow among the men, for each day brought them perceptibly nearer the enemy and the actual clash of arms. Daily the rumors from ahead grew in size and portent. The scouts were in contact with the enemy's advance. There had been a brush. The first shots had been exchanged, and the sight of two or three wounded men carried by on stretchers set the whole regiment to shouting "*Banzai!*" and put fresh vigor into their steps. They sang the war songs they had learned in barracks back in Tokyo, the precentors striding along at the side of the column chanting the lines, and the whole regiment roaring them out after the leaders.

They were going over the ground from which the men of their regiment, now awaiting their call in the Second Reserves, had helped to drive the scrambling Chinese in the war that had been the forerunner of this one. Every day brought them to some new point of interest that set tongues to wagging with increasing volubility and gave new impetus to the march. Each night the kindly surgeon looked them over and gave a helpful bit of advice here, and a friendly word of warning



there, showed how to bathe and bandage the blistered feet or massage the aching limbs, added sober caution about the use of water and told how to avoid taking cold.

So half the long march was covered. Far ahead, they knew, was the wide river where the enemy was expected to make his determined stand. There would be their first battle, and they pressed on toward it eagerly as toward the goal of a life's ambition. But one morning, when the regiment had the head of the column, all unexpectedly the sound of rifle fire a little ahead drifted back to them, and immediately the order to double brought a roaring cheer as they sprang forward. The enemy had made a dash with cavalry, and the advanced guard was checked. Up they swept with flashing eyes, hot for the fight. Through Soichi's brain whirled a wild vision of a charge in the face of the foe and the heavy pack grew lighter as he rushed forward. But it was no charge. Deployed under cover of a long stone wall they had barely tasted the joy of using their rifles when the enemy fled, leaving behind only four or five of his dead to mark the place of his defeat. It was hardly a skirmish, but it

served to fire the blood of the men, and serenely they promised to wipe out the disappointment when at last the great day should come.

The winter wore away and spring came on. Still they were tramping steadily toward the river. Work was much easier now that they had settled into it, and they made more miles with less waste of energy. The grass turned green in the valleys, and along the streams the first wild flowers put forth their blossoms. Fur-lined greatcoats gave place to wool, and with these rolled on the shoulders instead of flapping about the legs the men stepped along lightly and gayly.

Now they learned a new exercise. Hardly would they get into camp before half of them would be turned out for instruction in field intrenchment. The short-handled shovel Soichi carried strapped to the side of his knapsack was not very large, but he learned how to dig a wide, deep hole with it in remarkably short time. Morning after morning as they moved on toward the north they left beside their camp ground proof of their work in samples of the different kinds of trenches they might come to need in the field.

They saw very little of the enemy. After that one brief clash he seemed unwilling to venture another encounter and kept out of the way, except that now and then a little group of his horsemen appeared for a few minutes on some far-off hill. It was march and dig and sleep, and do it all over again. But all the time they were nearing the river, and at last, when they had been almost two months on the road, they came to the range of bold hills that flanked the stream and concealed the enemy's country from their view.

Here they camped several days. The scouts and advanced guards had driven the Russians back to the islands in the stream and the near shore was their own. But before they could go over the range and down into the town that lay in the pockets of the hills on the river bank, another kind of work was to be done. In little squads they scoured the near-by country with axes and ropes and brought in great bundles of pine boughs from the scrub-covered hills, and piles of mats and long cornstalks from the huts. Then at night they crossed the hills and flanked the river side of the road with tall-screens which shut off the view of the enemy's scouts on the high cross-river ridges. Where

the way led straight toward his camps they built huge arches, whose broad tops made a great curtain that covered the road entirely. Then, sheltered by arches and screens, so that no enemy could tell their strength, they marched on into the town and were quartered once more in comfortable houses. Soichi dropped his pack with strange exaltation. When they left this place it would be to go to battle, and perhaps that fight would bring the opportunity he desired.







### XIII

**I**T was ten o'clock the second night in town, and Soichi had been asleep in his warm red blankets two hours or more when the sergeant shook him awake and told him to get up. He was to take rifle and cartridge belt and follow, making no noise. In the darkness he joined a squad of his mates and saw Omori, Ito, and two or three others of his friends, all equipped as he was. Presently an officer came up and Soichi recognized Kokan. He saw the lieutenant give him a sharp look, and heard him mutter something he did not understand. Then without a word

Kokan strode away and the sergeant told them to come on. Nothing had been said of the duty, but Soichi knew it was not sentry-go and guessed they were going scouting.

In silence broken only by the muffled footsteps on the soft earth they followed Kokan to the river's edge. A man with a boat was waiting and they stepped in softly, careful to make no noise. The man stood up, and with his long oar skillfully and silently drove the boat out into the stream.

In a whisper the order was passed to load magazines, but not to fire except to avoid capture. The hard, metallic click of a magazine spring betrayed the haste of one of the men in shoving his cartridge home. In the ghostly stillness it came like the crack of a rifle and brought a sharp whisper from Kokan:

"Kutami, was that you?"

But Soichi had thought of that and muffled his magazine with his blouse so that no sound came from it.

"Even here!" he thought, surprised. "Will he forget his duty to think of me now? Well, he shall have no just complaint."

Softly the boat came up to the bank of the island, and noiselessly the men made their way

to land. Then, while they gathered about him in a ring, Kokan whispered their instructions. They were to spread out and endeavor to get by the Russian outposts concealed in the clumps of willows that dotted the island, to work across to the next stream, note the width of the island and the character of the ground, the number of the outposts of the enemy they saw and their position. They had three hours for the work. At the end of that time they must be back at the boat. Any who did not return would be left to get back to camp as best he could. They must estimate the time, and in no case strike matches to consult watches. Kokan asked each man if he understood, and when all replied that they did he sent them away one by one. Then he himself started straight across the island alone.

Soichi had the downstream end of the line. It was a bad time for such work, one of those blue-black nights when the stars shine with multiplied brilliance, and the white sand of the island was a dangerous background for their dark uniforms. He took a long look at the heavens to select a guide and then pushed away from the bank, and, crouching stealthily, walked with long steps directly toward a single

willow that stood a few yards inshore. There he paused and took stock of his situation. Off to his right he saw dimly a dark figure crawling across the sand. It was one of his comrades, and he realized what a telltale his uniform was. With sudden resolve he took it off, and smiled to see how his gray flannels matched the sand. Then he pulled off his boots, and with only his rifle and shells started on. He walked upright, with the rifle held close by his side, and moved as fast as he could. His soldier's instinct warned him to avoid the clumps of trees and bushes, and from tree to tree that stood alone he worked his way. A queer fancy struck him to count his steps the better to estimate the distance he traveled, but he soon found that it distracted his attention from his work. So he changed his plan, and at each pause under a bush calculated its distance from the last and mentally kept the sum of the whole. To reckon the time was the hardest, and after a little he gave up guessing at that. He would do his work first and let the time take care of itself.

Suddenly as he sat resting and thinking under cover of a thick willow, he heard a sound that seemed close at his left. With every sense





He saw dimly a dark figure.



alert he gazed in the direction whence it came, and waited. Presently it was repeated, and now he recognized a man's voice, husky and guttural from the unsuccessful effort to whisper. He lay face down on the sand to muffle his heart, for it seemed that the enemy surely must hear its beating. Then as he watched he saw a match struck in a clump of willows scarcely forty yards away, and presently caught the glow of a lighted cigarette. Soon another and another appeared, and then their aroma came faintly to him across the night. Three men awake, he thought; did that mean a dozen in the post? He wasted no time in guessing, but flat on his face wriggled away across the sand. He was inside the line of outposts now, and when he had crawled a long distance and put some bushes between himself and the men he had so nearly run into, he rose and walked rapidly forward.

He had advanced what he calculated to be nearly a mile from the boat, and thought he must be nearing the stream he was seeking. The ground became less sandy and there were fewer trees and bushes. He thought it unlikely that the Russians would have more outposts there. He had almost concluded to make a run

for it to the river, when a rifle shot to his right and behind him sent him flat to the ground in breathless suspense. Someone had been discovered! Other shots followed, and then a fusillade that sounded like that morning brush when he had first heard fire. He crawled to the nearest bush and lay still.

No bullets whistled his way and he heard no reports from the rifles of his men. The fire was all Russian, and he hoped it was only a scare and that his men had got away. Then he saw that the firing was extending toward the river, and the reports of Japanese rifles mingled in the sound. They were caught back there, and his heart stood still at the thought that the success of the night's work might depend on him. From the direction in which the firing came he thought the Russians must be near his boat. Perhaps his party were all cut off and killed, or worse than that, captured.

The firing ceased, and he lay under his bush and wondered what to do. He remembered that he had not yet reached the river, and he rose and ran swiftly forward. Soon he caught the gleam of water, and in a moment was at the bank. He lay down and went over his calcula-



tion of the distance he had come. Then he looked up at the stars, marked out his course, and started back.

He knew the location of one outpost, and he thought at first his best chance was to go as close to it as he had come. But he reflected that all the sleeping men must have been roused by the firing, and that if they had discovered the boat they would watch to see if any of the scouting party came back to it. No, he must go another way and swim the stream. But he wanted his uniform. He dreaded what would be said to him if he went back without it. How to get it was the question. The aroused Russians were between him and the bush where it lay.

The fire had not extended much to his right and he judged that the line of outposts did not reach far that way. He turned sharply downstream and moved as rapidly as he dared. At times, when the way was open, he ran; but in the bushes it was slow work. At last he ventured to turn back toward his own shore. Cautiously he made his way until the soft lap of the water on the bank caught his ear. Here was the stream. Should he strike in, or try for the uniform? He wondered how long he had

been on the island. It might be an hour, it might be two. The night was yet far from spent. A low ridge of sand ran parallel with the bank, shutting the stream from his sight. He moved stealthily to the river side of it and made up his mind to go after his uniform. The ridge would guide him to the bush where it lay, and if worse came to worst a quick leap would take him into the water and he would trust to the darkness to escape the Russian lead.

At first he walked upright, near the water, and traveled rapidly. Then as he approached the point where he judged the Russians might be, he came close under the ridge and crawled on hands and knees. It was ticklish work, and the rifle bothered him badly. Not a sound came to his alert ears. By and by he wriggled to the top of the ridge and peered over. After a time he thought he could make out the willows where the smokers had been. His own bush was not far off now and he crawled on.

A new thought stopped him like a blow. Suppose the Russians had found his clothes and were waiting for him to come for them. That was a matter to be considered, and he pondered it seriously for some time. Then he

went on. He would take the chance. Keeping the ridge between himself and it he crawled opposite the bush and lay a long time listening intently. He was so near he thought he could hear the breathing of any man waiting, and knew he would hear a movement. Not a sound came from the bush, and at length he ventured on. It was but an instant's work to gather up trousers, blouse, and boots and scuttle back over the ridge.

One foot was in a trouser leg when he stopped. The river was wide and swift. It would be hard enough to swim as he was, and the thick uniform would hamper him terribly. He thought it over a moment, then swiftly rolled up blouse and boots and tied them with the trouser legs in a bundle at the back of his neck. Then he slung his rifle across his back and waded in. The water was icy cold, but he moved slowly lest he make a noise and arouse some Russian. He was up to his waist and almost ready to strike out when an unlucky step brought his foot down on a stone that turned and he stumbled forward with a loud splash.

Instantly there came a hoarse, Russian shout from up the stream and he ducked. As he went down he heard the loud report of a rifle

and felt the wind of a bullet over his head. He plunged forward and swam rapidly out and downstream. Low in the water, with head as far down as he could keep it, he put all his strength into his strokes. Behind him the Russians along the shore fired as if charged by an army. The bullets sang over his head and hissed in the water beside him. He heard the roar of the rifles and the shouts of the men, and tried to dive, but under water the bundle and rifle held him back, and he gave that up.

Gradually the firing slackened, and when it ceased he judged by the current that he was in mid-stream. He was very tired now, and very cold. He began to fear he could not get across. But the thought of the disgrace of failure after all he had done nerved him for fresh effort. He had the information the party had been sent to get, and it might be that none of the others had secured it. He must go on. In spite of his exertion the cold was agonizing. His bones ached from it, and his heart was bursting with the strain. He had done his best. He could do no more. The bank that seemed so near was yet out of reach. He had taken his last stroke. No, one more, and now another.



A third, and his feet struck bottom. He staggered out and fell exhausted on the sand.

How long he lay thus he did not know. Aching from head to foot, shivering with cold and with rattling teeth, he struggled to his feet. Somewhere upstream lay his goal and he reeled toward it. Presently the walking warmed him a little. He unslung the bundle from his shoulders and put on the sodden uniform. Then he thrust his feet into the boots and went on. Dawn was breaking when he stood at his captain's door and heard the voice of Kokan saying:

"That fool Kutami aroused the Russians and we could not go on. We just barely got away. He spoiled it all, and probably was captured as well."

Then he went in and reported, and when he finished, heard, like a voice in a dream, his captain's comment:

"That is the spirit of *Yamato Damashii!*" (the soul of old Japan).

He turned and went out, with Kokan staring after him in speechless amazement.



#### XIV

**T**HERE followed a few days of grateful inactivity for Soichi. The surgeon said he must rest and recover from the strain and exposure of his night's work, and he found it very pleasant to lie in his blankets and smoke and receive the congratulations of his comrades. The story swept through the regiment and every man knew what he had done.

Kokan was not so comfortable. He was suffering from a mental difference with himself which urgently demanded adjustment. But pride stood in his way. He knew he had been wrong and he hated to admit it. His accusing self kept recalling to him the captain's

queer look that morning after Kutami had gone, when he turned to Kokan and said:

"I am inclined to think you are mistaken about him, Lieutenant Kudo;" then added, as if it were an afterthought, "it must have been someone else who alarmed the Russians."

"*Yamato Damashii*," the captain had said to Kutami, and it was true. He had acted with the spirit of the *Bushi*, the soldier knights of the old feudal days. With the bitterness of deserved self-accusation Kokan admitted the justice of Captain Minami's judgment. He, the Samurai, had failed, but Kutami, the Eta, had succeeded.

Soichi was lying on his back rereading O-Mitsu's letter for the thousandth time, although he knew it already by heart, when Kokan came in without his sword. He sprang to his feet and saluted, then stood at attention. But Kokan said:

"Sit down. I am not here as an officer. I came to talk a little with you."

Surprised and curious Soichi obeyed, wondering what it could be. His quarters-mates were all away and he and Kokan were alone. For some time they sat silent, the lieutenant uncertain how to begin. He had had a hard

struggle with himself, but his sense of right had triumphed. The last of the Kudos would not stain the family honor, kept spotless for so many scores of years.

"I blamed you unjustly," Kokan said bluntly at last. "It was not you who aroused the Russians."

"That is nothing," replied the amazed Soichi, and bowed respectfully. "I am only glad that your expedition was successful."

He cherished no animosity toward Kokan now, and it distressed him to see his lieutenant humbling himself in this manner. He had forgotten the things that had passed and his mind was set wholly on the future. His only hope was to die gloriously in action. But Kokan had made the plunge and now he was going through.

"I have been unjust to you at other times," he went on. "It is not becoming the honor of an officer or a Samurai to act meanly, and I have come here to express my regret."

Soichi was genuinely pained. His ready sympathy understood how hard it must be for the haughty Kokan thus to demean himself, and he responded quickly:

"I beg you not to think of it, or to say such



things. I want only to do my duty, and you have helped me to that."

"I?" exclaimed Kokan, surprised in his turn. "I helped you? Tell me how."

"Please do not think me rude," replied Soichi. "It is hard to explain to you. You were born a Samurai and have an inheritance of honor to maintain. It is natural to you. It comes without thought. It is merely to live in the old way. I was born a Commoner, but the son of one who had been despised as an outcast. The Emperor gave us citizenship. It is to him we owe everything. To win honor is our first duty, for surely that is what he meant when he promoted us. Honor lies in his service. To give him true service, therefore, is all my wish, and if sometimes I have felt that you—that someone was watching closely to catch me in failure, it has helped me to be a better soldier, and perhaps brought me nearer to winning honor."

Kokan sat like one in a dream. This son of an Eta was telling him things he had heard from his father and read in the books of the Samurai of generations long ago. It was the old doctrine of the *Bushi*, but he spoke it as if it were his own discovery.

"You talk like a Samurai," he said, and rising abruptly, went away.

He had caught a glimpse of the soul of honor and it dazzled him. Here was honor for honor's sake. No other thought, no consideration of self, no hope of reward, no seeking for gain of any sort, the simple effort of a faithful heart to show in loyal, devoted service its gratitude for a great gift. In comparison with the high standard of his life, the teachings of his long line of soldier gentlemen, it was a thing of wonder and amazement. Many hours he pondered it, and from his meditation rose with a new resolve. The service of the Emperor had profited by that talk with the Commoner.

Spring was full-blown. The sun shone with summer warmth and fields and meadows were clothed with green. The leaves hung thickly on the trees, and masses of rhododendrons robed the slopes of the hills in pink. Through all the army ran the whisper of coming action. In the afternoon the men were in their quarters. In the evening, silently and swiftly they moved out. They bivouacked for the night in the little pockets among the low hills close to

the water's edge, and in the starlight ate cold rice from their ration baskets. Then, rolled up in their blankets, they slept, rifles by their sides.

The bark of a gun heralded the coming of the day, and the men rose to see the battle joined. All day they lay in their hollows and heard the hoarse, angry roaring of the guns and the vicious rush of shells, as if a mighty wind beat through the tops of a forest of pines. Darkness fell and the guns ceased their frightful clamor. Then came the order to move.

All night they toiled. As if by miracle they saw the pontoons thrown across the rushing streams, and the lumbering guns swing forward. In the soft sand of the islands they put their shoulders to the wheels the tired horses could not turn, and on the cannon moved into their new positions. The murky gray of early dawn found the Russian hills ringed in front with Japanese steel. The day had come at last when Kutami Soichi was to meet the test.

Fiercely through the lifting mist rang the challenge of the guns, and over the heads of the Guards, lying far out on the sandy island,

screamed the deadly shells, searching the nooks and corners of the Russian lines. Soichi was in the first line. Across his breast hung his boxes of cartridges, and in the blue cloth tied over his shoulder were his two little baskets of rice. His rifle, polished and cleaned with arduous care, was ready.

For half an hour the shells flew over their heads, and then along the line rang a single shrill blast of a whistle. Instantly they were on their feet and surging ahead. One wild "*Banzai!*" rolled from their throats and they settled to their work. Suddenly the silent trenches along the hills leaped into life and the storm of Russian lead beat upon them. Steadily they went forward, not a rifle making answer to the fierce fire from the hilltops. Men went down, but only those stopped who could not go on. Into the last of the three broad streams they plunged, and under that unceasing sweep of bullets forged across. Then on the double they sprang ahead, while above them still hurtled the venomous messengers from their own guns. The earth shook with the concussion of the cannon, and the beautiful day smiled on hill and river red with war. Fairly at the foot of the Russian height they



halted, and for a brief breathing space stood still.

At the left of the line, where the Guards were to charge, the enemy held the crest of the ridge with a double line of trenches terminating in a square redoubt. There were the red-mouthed guns belching their hail of iron death. In front, on the slopes, were fences and crisscrosses and tangles of wire, winding in and about among traps and pits and jagged stakes, and swept unceasingly by the murderous fire of the rifles and machine guns in the trenches.

Three things Soichi knew no soldier should remember on the battlefield—his home, his dear ones, and his own body. Calmly he surveyed the terrible ground over which he was about to undertake the desperate rush. Up there, on the heights, were the lines to which some of them must go through to plant the flag of the Rising Sun, as the Emperor wished. He wondered who would be the one to win that coveted honor. As for him, this was the hour in which he was to die his "glorious death."

Almost before he knew it the whistle shrilled again and they were off, running steadily, in

wide open lines, straight up the rugged hillside. They cheered once at the start, a full-throated, rousing "*Banzai! Banzai! Teikoku Banzai!*" but it took too much breath from the running, and they stopped, that the work might not suffer.

Now as he raced along, the young soldier found himself curiously taking note of things occurring around him. His right-hand man went down, and Soichi, seeing him fall, knew that he was dead. There was one, he thought, who had gained the prize of glory. It seemed strange that he, too, was not hit. And there was Lieutenant Kudo, perhaps a pace ahead of the line, running as hard as he could and somehow finding breath to shout to the men. He marveled at it, and with mind bent on that wonder, ran full into a tangled wire that stopped him with a jerk, almost throwing him backward to the ground. It filled him with sudden surprised rage, and he grasped the wire and tugged away at it as if to pull it away by main strength.

All the time he heard the soft voices of the bullets flying close by his head, the little half whisper like the cheep of tired chicks nestling at dark under the protecting feathers of the

mother hen. The wire would not yield, though all along its length the men had laid hold as he had, and were putting forth all their might. As he looked, Soichi saw a line of his comrades who had fallen by the fence, struck down on the measured range. He drew back his rifle and brought the sharp bayonet down on the wire with a savage swing, all his weight in the blow. Clean to the ground it went, through all the strands, and the way was open.

On he dashed, not even looking to see whether any followed. Blindly he knew that Kokan was near him, still calling. He was so tired he could hardly lift his feet, and yet he kept on running, running, always running up that death-swept slope. Now the men knew the secret of the wires and there was little delay. Soichi heard the machine guns rattle as he had heard the typhoon rains beat on the iron roof of his father's warehouse. The Russian guns sent their shells shrieking over the slope and carrying away his mates in groups. He saw men fall into the pits, stumble and throw forward, crumple up and drop, go down all about him. Still the prize was not his. He went on.

Then, without warning, the world came to its end. The whooping and whistling, the shrieking and singing of shells and bullets ceased, and with a far-off, muffled roar, the solid earth rose beneath him and hurled him headlong forward, him and Kokan together. He wondered, curiously, as he was in the air, if it were to be the trick of fate that he and the lieutenant were to win death together. Then he fell, and for an instant neither saw nor heard nor felt nor thought. A voice calling in tones he knew, brought him back to himself and the riot and din of the horrible maelstrom. He struggled to his feet to hear Kokan shouting to him:

“Come on, Kutami! Now show if you can fight!”

The quick blood leaped in him at the challenge and he sprang forward. Over his shoulder, as he turned, he caught a glimpse of the great hole where the mine had exploded, and beyond it, down the slope, he saw men going back, Guardsmen, his own Guards! The horror and shame of it filled him with rage, and he began to run again, on up the hill. Something was the matter with his head, he did not know what, nor did he care. He and Kokan



were left, and if all the rest failed they two would go on. He shouted in answer to the lieutenant's call, and strove to overtake him. With the sword of his fathers flashing over his head the Samurai boy ran, shouted, staggered, went down. Of all the charge Soichi alone was left.

Yet he went on. The Russians in the trenches cheered him and held their fire, too brave themselves to murder the brave. And, in the sudden hush that fell on the awful day, Soichi heard Kokan calling again:

"Come here, Samurai! I am wounded! Take me back!"

Samurai! Kokan had called him Samurai! All in a daze Soichi obeyed, thrust his arms under those of the wounded lieutenant, heaved him up on his back and staggered slowly down the hill. He walked like one in a dream, neither seeing nor caring where he stepped, and yet by miracle not falling. And when some of the men in the trenches, more ruthless than the others, fired again, he shifted Kokan in front of him lest he be thought to shield himself by his burden.

He was halfway down when suddenly the trenches burst into flame once more, and he

saw his Guards coming back. The reserves were up! The charge was renewed! Methodically he looked about him, found a pit, carefully laid the wounded officer there out of danger, wheeled and headed the new assault. Oh, how tired he was! How hard it was to keep his legs from doubling under him! And yet he must! This was the day he was to die a glorious death.

Back again by the mine-wrought hollow, the fresh men up with him now, and some of them ahead. One he saw with the colors, the clear white banner with its broad red sun. A bullet hit his rifle and struck it violently from his hands. He paused, confused, and saw the color bearer pitch forward on his face and the colors fall. A voice seemed to shout in his ear:

“It is the Emperor’s wish!”

He sprang forward, grasped the staff and waved the flag over his head. Under the awful fire the line was beginning to falter, but the flag caught their eyes and a cheer rang up the hill behind him. He filled his lungs and shouted “*Banzai!*” It was as if new strength came to him with the call. He dashed on, reached the wall of the redoubt and scram-



“ Banzai ! ”





bled up, waving his banner and roaring "*Banzai!*"

He saw his fellows swarming about him and knew they had won. Then something struck him a terrible blow on the shoulder and he fell unconscious on the rampart.





XV

**L**YING on a board in the field hospital at the foot of the hill up which he had charged, Soichi opened his eyes to see the slow sun dropping behind the ridge across the river they had won. The long line of carts and pack horses filing by, told him the victory was complete, the transportation was coming up. His head and arm and shoulder were wrapped with bandages, and when he turned slightly on his hard bed a sharp pain warned him to lie still. A man in a long white apron, with his sleeves rolled up and a red cross on his arm came to-

ward him, and he recognized the spectacled, kindly face of the surgeon. With a pleasant smile the doctor looked him in the face and touched his wrist a moment.

"You'll do now," he said.

Then two men came with a stretcher and carried him to a soft bed of blankets in a big white tent, and told him to go to sleep. It was very comfortable in the warm bed, and he lay there quietly, trying to recall the events of the day. After a little, he turned his head slowly and stared into the eyes of the man in the next bed. It was Lieutenant Kudo.

"Oho," said Kokan, and his eyes danced. "It's you, is it, Samurai? They say you won the charge."

But because he was a good soldier and it was the order, Soichi calmly closed his eyes and went to sleep.

Next morning stretcher men came again and carried Soichi and all his tent mates into the town they had helped to capture the day before, and there, in a fine, big room in a solid house, he found another bed of blankets ready for him. Kokan was not with them; the officers had a different hospital and there the Samurai boy was taken. Wrapped in his soft

blankets Soichi rested and dreamed and slept. One morning when the surgeon came to see him he brought some officers of the staff, and one of them, a grizzled colonel, with the star of a great decoration blazing on his breast, spoke to him and asked his name. Soichi tried to stand up, as was proper for a man answering an officer, but the colonel forbade him and he lay still. Then the colonel said in a loud voice, so that all the room could hear:

"The general sends his compliments to Kutami Soichi-san, first-class private, and grants him a *kanjo* for his extraordinarily gallant conduct in the charge of the Guards and at the redoubt."

Before Soichi could think, his wounded comrades were shouting "*Banzai!*" the grizzled colonel joining with all his voice. For a moment he could not speak. He was overwhelmed with the unexpected honor. A *kanjo*, that certificate of merit and honorable service more dearly prized than life itself. He had never dared to dream of winning that. The staff officers saw his confusion and smiled in kindly encouragement, and the surgeon beamed at him through the big spectacles.



He lifted his head a little and tried to reply to the colonel.

"It was only a little," he said feebly; "nothing at all. I thought it was the Emperor's wish!"

He fell back on his blankets, and with flashing eyes the staff officers saluted him and stalked out of the room.

"Ha!" said the colonel, as he mounted his horse, "there is a soldier!"

His comrades were miles away, daring the Russians to renewed conflict, when Soichi had recovered enough to walk about a little and write to his father.

"I had hoped to win a glorious death," he said in his first letter, "as was fitting for the first Kutami to be a soldier of the empire. But now I have received this honorable *kanjo* and I am happy to live and to come back to see you and my mother again. I shall be quite well in a little time, but my service is ended. The surgeon says my rifle arm will not stand that work again, and a better man must take my place. I tried to do my duty, but now it is finished.

"For one thing I am very glad. Kokan and I are friends. We are coming home very

soon, as soon as we can travel, but Kokan will return when he is quite well. He calls me Samurai now, and says I 'won it with the redoubt.' We have talked much about the old days and our homes, and even about O-Mitsu. Perhaps if you send someone to ask Kudo-san for her now he would not refuse."

It was a different letter that Lieutenant Kudo sent to the house in Timber Street. Himself he spared not at all, and in long detail told the story of the midnight scout and described the day of battle.

"You do not know this Kutami," he said. "He may have the name of an Eta, but he has the heart of a thousand Samurai. He has taught me a great lesson. O-Mitsu will be honored, and we too, if he still wishes to marry her."

When Jukichi read the letter he sat a long time in silence, but O-Mitsu put her face in the cushion and wept for joy.

Two gray-haired men stood together on the landing watching the hospital ship swing into her moorings. Together they stepped down to the launch that puffed out into the bay, and as the steamer's anchor rattled down, together they stood up and shouted "*Banzai!*" To-

gether Jukichi and Chobei climbed the gangway to greet their soldier sons. That day the Gentleman had accepted the Commoner's proposal for his daughter, and in the house in Timber Street a happy girl was awaiting the return of her lover.





## XVI

**T**HE period of "Little Heat" had come and gone. Natsu-zemi and Min-min-zemi boomed their deafening chorus in the pines about the Shinto shrine and the rice was tall and straight in the myriad fields. The *kitsunichi* (lucky day) had come, and as evening fell, O-Mitsu waited in her pure white robe the coming of the friends who were to bear her away to her husband. Presently the little group set out, and in a few moments the house in Azalea Street had received its new mistress.

When she had changed to the beautiful new dress of softest silk Soichi had given her, she sat down with him and drank the *san-san ku-*



do that made her his wife. Three times from each of the three cups she sipped the sake and passed the cup to him. Then, husband and wife, they joined the friends assembled in the wide rooms for the feast that crowned the day. And among those guests none were more honored than Kudo Jukichi and his son. The proud old Samurai had taken the last step, and become in fact as well as in law, a citizen of the new Empire.

(1)





## IOLE

Colored inlay on the cover, decorative borders, head-pieces, thumb-nail sketches, and tail-pieces. Frontispiece and three full-page illustrations. 12mo. Ornamental Cloth, \$1.25.

Does anybody remember the opera of *The Inca*, and that heart-breaking episode where the Court Undertaker, in a morbid desire to increase his professional skill, deliberately accomplishes the destruction of his middle-aged relatives in order to inter them for the sake of practice?

If I recollect, his dismal confession runs something like this:

"It was in bleak November  
When I slew them, I remember,  
As I caught them unawares  
Drinking tea in rocking-chairs."

And so he talked them to death, the subject being "*What Really Is Art?*"  
Afterward he was sorry—

"The squeak of a door,  
The creak of a floor,  
My horrors and fears enhance;  
And I wake with a scream  
As I hear in my dream  
The shrieks of my maiden aunts!"

Now it is a very dreadful thing to suggest that those highly respectable pseudo-spinsters, the *Sister Arts*, supposedly cozily immune in their polygamous chastity (for every suitor for favor is popularly expected to be wedded to his particular art)—I repeat, it is very dreadful to suggest that these impeccable old ladies are in danger of being talked to death.

But the talkers are talking and *Art Nouveau* rockers are rocking, and the trousers of the prophet are patched with stained glass, and it is a day of dinkiness and of thumbs.

Let us find comfort in the ancient proverb: "*Art talked to death shall rise again.*" Let us also recollect that "*Dinky is as dinky does;*" that "*All is not Shaw that Bernards;*" that "*Better Yeates than Clever;*" that words are so inexpensive that there is no moral crime in robbing Henry to pay James.

Firmly believing all this, abjuring all atom-pickers, slab furniture, and woodchuck literature—save only the immortal verse:

"And there the wooden-chuck doth tread;  
While from the oak trees' tops  
The red, red squirrel on the head  
The frequent acorn drops."

Abjuring, as I say, dinkiness in all its forms, we may still hope that those cleanly and respectable spinsters, the *Sister Arts*, will continue throughout the ages, rocking and drinking tea unterrified by the million-tongued clamor in the back yard and below stairs, where thumb and forefinger continue the question demanded by intellectual exhaustion:

"*L'arr! Kesker say l'arr?*"

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## WHERE LOVE CONQUERS.

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### The Reckoning.

By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

The author's intention is to treat, in a series of four or five romances, that part of the war for independence which particularly affected the great landed families of northern New York, the Johnsons, represented by Sir William, Sir John, Guy Johnson, and Colonel Claus; the notorious Butlers, father and son, the Schuylers, Van Rensselaers, and others.

The first romance of the series, *Cardigan*, was followed by the second, *The Maid-at-Arms*. The third, in order, is not completed. The fourth is the present volume.

As *Cardigan* pretended to portray life on the baronial estate of Sir William Johnson, the first uneasiness concerning the coming trouble, the first discordant note struck in the harmonious councils of the Long House, so, in *The Maid-at-Arms*, which followed in order, the author attempted to paint a patroon family disturbed by the approaching rumble of battle. That romance dealt with the first serious split in the Iroquois Confederacy; it showed the Long House shattered though not fallen; the demoralization and final flight of the great landed families who remained loyal to the British Crown; and it struck the key-note to the future attitude of the Iroquois toward the patriots of the frontier—revenge for their losses at the battle of Oriskany—and ended with the march of the militia and continental troops on Saratoga.

The third romance, as yet incomplete and unpublished, deals with the war-path and those who followed it led by the landed gentry of Tryon County; and ends with the first solid blow delivered at the Long House, and the terrible punishment of the Great Confederacy.

The present romance, the fourth in chronological order, picks up the thread at that point.

The author is not conscious of having taken any liberties with history in preparing a framework of facts for a mantle of romance.

ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

NEW YORK, *May 26, 1904.*

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D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, NEW YORK.

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